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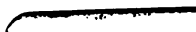
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L. L. Hayter

THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
DANTE ALIGHIERI.

THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
DANTE ALIGHIERI.

BY
COUNT CESARE BALBO.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY
F. J. BUNBURY.

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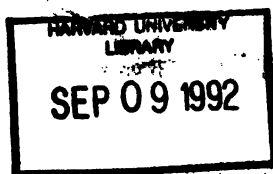
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PART II.

DANTE IN EXILE.

CHAPTER III.

POPE BENEDICT XI.—ATTEMPTS OF THE EXILES TO
RETURN TO THEIR NATIVE CITY, BY PEACEABLE OR
WARLIKE MEANS.

1304.

A FEW years after the death, or rather murder, of Pope Boniface, a good Dominican friar, of humble birth and gentle virtues, was elected as his successor, who assumed the name of Benedict XI. He was the best, if not the only good Pope, in a political view, among Dante's contemporaries, and he was never attacked by our Poet. He was elected, as often happened with the Popes, to correct the errors of his predecessors. He is thus described by Muratori:—"He was neither a Guelf nor

a Ghibelline, but their common father; he did not sow discord, but banished it; he never thought of exalting his relations, nor did he seek to enrich himself; and his benign soul was more inclined to indulgence than rigour*." This assuredly was a better disposition towards being a peacemaker than that of the *magnanimous sinner*; and Benedict, having been reconciled to the Colonnas and to France, turned his attention to Florence, one of the sparks of discord. He sent there as Legate the Cardinal of Ostia, Niccolo da Prato from Perugia; he, as well as the Pope, belonged to the preaching friars; "he was of mean family, but of great learning, gracious and wise, but of Ghibelline parentage;" thus he was sent at the instigation of the Bianchi and Ghibellines, and arrived at Florence on the 10th of March, 1304†. In that city the victorious party of the Neri had now become divided, just as, three years before, the Guelfs had split into the two factions of the Bianchi and Neri. Messer Corso Donati, who was never contented, was at the head of the Nobles, who were naturally dissatisfied as long as the supremacy of the Popolani lasted. Messer Rosso della Tosa was at the head of these last, whom Dino Compagni‡ calls the *popolo grasso* (the rich citizens), and Giovanni Villani the *buoni uomini* (good men), of Florence. Dino gives us a new list of the families who adhered to each of these new

* Mur. Ann. all' anno 1304. Compare with Dino, p. 115.

† Dino Com. pp. 115, 118.

‡ Dino Com. p. 117. Villani, p. 401.

parties, as a few pages back he gave us a list of those who belonged to the Bianchi and Neri. And as the two factions of 1301 more or less leaned towards the banished Ghibellines, so the parties of 1304 were chiefly distinguished by showing more or less mildness towards the banished Bianchi. Corso at any rate wished to be at peace with the exiles, whether it was on account of his new relationship with Ugucione della Faggiola*, or because he felt himself less strong within the city, and was therefore more inclined to ally himself with those without. The Cardinal was received in Florence with olive-branches and great rejoicings. "After having for some days rested, he demanded the government (*balia*) from the people, in order that he might constrain the citizens to make peace; this was granted to him until the kalends of May, 1304, and was afterwards prolonged for a whole year†." He began by reconciling the parties within the city; he gave offices to the partisans of Corso, and made him the Captain of the Party Guelf, which, as we have already shown in several places, was an office of great importance. But, above all, on the 26th of April, "the people having assembled in the square of Santa Maria Novella, in the presence of the magistrates were many reconciliations effected, which were sealed by kisses on the lips; contracts were made . . . and this peace-making seemed to please every-

* Veltro, p. 68.

† Dino Com. p. 118.

body so much that, a heavy rain coming on, no one departed, and they did not seem to feel it. The illuminations were great, the church bells rang, and every one rejoiced. But the palace of the Gianfigliacci, which had made great illuminations for war, was dark that evening, and this was much talked about; "they said, it was no sign of peace". At last the Cardinal so softened them with gentle words, that they allowed syndics to be called in, that is to say, deputies from the exiles, to treat of peace with those within. Dino names two of each party; Villani says there were twelve on each side, but he does not name them.

One of his biographers has conjectured that Dante was one of those who are not named. But there are two reasons against this: first, it is nowhere recorded; secondly, had it been true that he ever returned to the city, even for a time, it would have been somewhere mentioned in the *Commedia*, which gives all the principal phases of his banishment. We however find, from an authentic document, that he was among the twelve councillors who were assembled a month afterwards in the valley of the Ambra, in the castle of Gargonza, to direct the negotiations of his party, and their preparations for war; and we may conjecture that these may be the same councillors who shortly before directed the negotiations with Florence. At any rate we see that Dante had thus returned from his first place of refuge,

* Dino Com. p. 119. Villani, p. 402.

Verona, and returned not only in a good understanding with his party, but as one of its chief leaders; thus it is clear, that whatever contempt towards it he might have inwardly harboured, he had not as yet separated himself from it.

The first of May had been often ominous to Dante, and it was a noted day in Florence; for in proportion to the feasting that then took place, men judged of the prosperity and tranquillity of her citizens. Villani here relates, that in this year on the first of May, (as in the good old times of peace when Florence was in prosperity,) there were the usual entertainments and banquets, and "each quarter of the city vied with the other, as far as lay in its power and means. Among these the citizens of the Borgo San Friano, who had of old been accustomed to perform new and various games, sent a proclamation through the town, that *any one who might desire to learn news of the other world should come to the Ponte alla Carraia**, and the banks of the Arno round about it, on the kalends of May. And scaffolding was erected upon boats and ships in the Arno, and it was made in the resemblance and figure of Hell, with flames and other punishments, and torments and demons, and men distorted, horrible to look upon, and others which had the forms of naked spirits; and they placed them in different torments, with tremendous

* One of the bridges of Florence, over the Arno. (TRANSL.)

cries, and shrieks and noise, which was a revolting and terrible thing to hear and to look upon. This new show attracted many spectators, and the bridge being full and crowded, and at that time built of wood, broke down from the weight of the people that were upon it. Many persons died there, and were drowned in the Arno, and many received bodily hurt; so that what was meant to be acted in jest turned out true, and as it was said in the proclamation; for many being killed went to learn news about the other world. There was great weeping and sorrow throughout all the city, for every one thought he had lost a son or a brother. And this was an omen of the future misery that in certain time would happen to our city, for the excessive wickedness of our citizens*."

From this event there arose a story, that Dante had taken from it the idea of his Poem, the true origin of which we have seen was thirteen years earlier. Others on the contrary assert that from his Poem the Florentines had taken the idea of this show. But no part of the *Commedia*, not even the *Inferno*, was either completed or published at that time, although it is not impossible that the grand idea of it, and the first cantos, or Latin attempts at it, were even then already known and famous. At any rate we see how a great work like this always agrees with the public taste.

The bad omens were only too soon verified. The

* Villani, p. 408.

Bianchi and Ghibellines, approaching Monte Accianico on their return from the assistance they gave to Forlì, inspired the rulers of Florence with suspicion*. Rosso della Tosa, the head of the popular party within the city, delayed and hindered the negotiations. On the 6th of May, the accomplishment of a general reconciliation of parties was entrusted to the Cardinal and four powerful men, but foreigners, and probably at a distance; they were Messer Mastino della Torre of Milan, Messer Antonio da Fostierato of Lodi, Messer Antonio de' Brusciati of Brescia, and Messer Guidotto de' Bagni of Bergamo. This reconciliation could only have been effected by recalling the exiles, and sharing the public offices with them; and the measure proposed was not the way to settle anything. "Then those who were opposed to the Pope," says Dino, "so wrought upon the Cardinal with their false speeches, that they removed him from Florence, saying to him: 'My Lord, before you proceed further to make up a peace, ascertain that Pistoia obeys; because we making peace, and Pistoia remaining with our opponents, we shall be deceived.'" Pistoia, in which the divisions of the Bianchi and Neri had originated, was the only city of Tuscany that had remained Bianca. But the Cardinal's enemies "did not say this because they wished for peace, could they gain over Pistoia, but in order to prolong the negotia-

* Dino Com. p. 120. Villani, p. 402.

tions; and they influenced him so much by their falsely coloured words, that on the 8th of May he departed from Florence*."

From thence he went first to his native city Prato, and then to Pistoia; he tried to reconcile these two cities, but at Pistoia he was not listened to, and they drove him out of Prato, which last town he excommunicated; he then returned to Florence, where he resumed his labours, and managed to introduce into the city fourteen commissioners from the exiles†. The principal of these was *Baschiera della Tosa*. The two leaders, *Corso Donati* and *Rosso della Tosa*, were the chief of the commissioners for those within the city; thus (as it often happens in civil wars) two of the same family, *Rosso* and *Baschiera*, were found on opposite sides. The commissioners paid each other reciprocal honours, and the people entertained much hopes from them‡. But the *Bianchi* remained suspiciously on the south side of the *Arno*, in the house of the *Mozzi*, fortified with wooden palisades and guarded, and the *Neri* would yield nothing. The *Bianchi* were advised to enter the city, and to fortify themselves in the house of the *Cavalcanti*; but these last would not consent to receive them. And so at last, on the 8th of June, the *Bianchi* departed

* *Dino Com.* p. 120.

† This is according to *Dino Compagni*, p. 122. *Villani* says twelve. Perhaps they were twelve new ones, in addition to the two already named by *Dino*, which would make up fourteen.

‡ *Dino Com.* p. 123.

of their own accord; and the Cardinal, having been threatened, left the city on the 9th, saying to the Florentines: "Since you desire to be at war, and under a malediction, and will neither listen to nor obey the messenger of God's vicar, nor be quiet, nor at peace with one another, remain under the malediction of God and the Holy Church*." On the same day, the 9th of June, or on the following day, the two factions within the city armed themselves, and on the 10th (not without Corso's party being suspected) there was a great fire which destroyed half Florence. So concluded this ill-omened negotiation. It is recorded by Dante in the tenth canto of the *Inferno*, written soon after, when his impressions of it were still vivid; it is in that truly dramatic scene between Farinata degli Uberti, the great Ghibelline of the preceding century, and Dante himself, who had sprung from a Guelf family. Dante having spoken of his own ancestors, Farinata says:—

"To me and mine, and to my party, erst
So fierce," he said, "the hatred which they bore,
That more than once their forces I dispersed."

Inferno, c. 10, v. 46–48.

Then Dante answers:—

"Though vanquish'd still they fear'd not to return
Each time," quoth I, "from every part again;
A happy art which thine have fail'd to learn."

Ibid. v. 49–51.

* Dino Com. p. 123. Villani, pp. 402, 403. Villani says the Cardinal departed on the 4th, but Dino is more to be depended upon.

Farinata's answer, after being interrupted by Cavalcante Cavalcanti, is as follows :—

“And if
 The art thou speak'st of, they have learnt so ill,
 That more torments me than this fiery bed.
 But the fair lady*, who here beareth sway,
 Not fifty times her silver face shall light,
 Ere thou wilt know how much that art doth weigh.”
Inferno, c. 10, v. 76.

Fifty months had exactly elapsed between the 17th of April, 1300 (the supposed date of Dante's descent into Hell, and thus of the conversation here referred to), and the 8th of June, 1304, the date of the rupture of these negotiations of the Bianchi; thus we see with what exactness he speaks, when he says that after this period of time he would learn what a difficult art it was to recover one's country†.

The Cardinal having returned to Perugia, to Bene-

* The moon in Heathen Mythology is called Proserpine, the Queen of Hell.

† From the 7th April to 31st December, 1300, 8 months 23 days.

all 1301, 12 “ ”

all 1302, 12 “ ”

all 1303, 12 “ ”

From the 1st January to 8th June, 1304, 5 “ 8 ”

50 months.

The author of the *Veltro* has already made this comparison; but in making Farinata say (p. 70): *Thou shalt learn what are the sorrows of exile*, he changes the sense of his words in some degree, which are more correctly, *Thou shalt learn how difficult it is to return from exile*.

dict XI., this good Pope summoned to him, to give account of their iniquitous proceedings, twelve of the principal Neri who then ruled Florence, among whom were the two chiefs Corso Donati and Rosso della Tosa. They came attended by a retinue of one hundred and fifty horse; and while they were thus detained at the Papal court, the exiles prepared with great secrecy to surprise Florence, thus deprived of her chiefs, divided by internal factions, and not yet recovered from the ravages of fire. The Cardinal was suspected of conniving at this enterprise*. The Bianchi collected their adherents from all the surrounding country. The principal of these were the Ubaldini in the Mugello. In the month of June a treaty was drawn up in the choir of the abbey of St. Gaudenzio, in which "Torrignano, Carbone, and Vieri de' Cerchi, Guellino de' Ricasoli Neri, eight or nine of the Ubertini, Andrea de' Gherardini, Branca and Clele degli Scolari, Danto Alighieri, Mino da Radda, and Bertino de' Pazzi, promise to make good at their own cost any losses or expenses which Ugolino da Feliccione, his sons, or any others of the house of Ubaldini, might incur in their temporal property or in their ecclesiastical benefices, on the occasion of any war that had been carried on, or was to be carried on, for the castle of Monte Accianico, or for any other fortress, either by their adherents or themselves, at their own choice, under

* Villani.

a penalty of 2000 marks of silver*. Here we find Dante again among the principal exiles. These having made an appointment with Messer Tolasato degli Uberti, and with horse and foot from their allies in Romagna, and from Bologna, Arezzo, and other places, they assembled to the number of twelve hundred men-at-arms at Lastra, about two miles from Florence†. It has been said by some, that if they had fallen on the city that night they would have taken it; by others, that if they had waited for the following night, and the assistance of the Pistoians, they would have been successful; but they did neither. Their captain was Alessandro da Romena; but the chief of the exiles was Baschiera della Tosa, who a little time before had been sent as one of the Commissioners to Florence; he had probably friends there who hurried him on, and he was young and daring. So, in broad day, on the 21st or 22nd of July‡, without waiting for the succours from Pistoia, nor for the hour they had fixed upon with the conspirators from the neighbourhood, "Baschiera and his horsemen descended into the town, and passing

* Pelli fixes the date of this treaty at 1307, but the author of the *Velcro* at 1304, very opportunely connecting it with the enterprise from Lastra. His reasons are given in the *Florence Anthology*, tom. xxv. p. 14.

† Dino Com. p. 127. Villani says there were 1600 horse and 9000 foot.

‡ Dino says (p. 127), "the day of St. Mary Magdalen, the 21st;" Villani (p. 406), "the day of St. Margaret, the 20th." But now at least St. Margaret's day is not the 20th; whence he must mean the same day as Dino; and St. Mary Magdalen not being the 21st, but the 22nd, this must have been the case.

through San Gallo, drew up near St. Mark, with the banners of the Bianchi displayed, with olive wreaths and naked swords, crying out '*Peace*,' and without committing any acts of plunder or violence. It was a fine sight to see them thus drawn up with tokens of peace. The heat was excessive, so that the air seemed on fire." They had no water,—the river was distant; the streets round St. Mark, which was then situated in a suburb, were barricaded by the citizens, who had recovered from their first surprise. The exiled Bianchi advanced however as far as the gate, and some of them entered the city fighting; but the Bianchi within not only did not join them, but turned against them, to avoid being afterwards suspected. A fire breaking out near the gate, those who had entered feared to be shut in, and flying in disorder joined the main body before St. Mark; and the infection of flight passing through them even to the reserve at Lastra, they were scattered far and wide. Baschiera carried off two of his nieces, who were very rich, from the monastery of San Domenico. The disbanded fugitives were not pursued by the citizens, but were seized by the peasantry, who hung them up by the roadside. The main body met the Uberti and the Pistoians who were coming to their assistance, and who vainly endeavoured with their reproaches to induce them to turn back. But reproaches are always fruitless on these occasions; and thus disgracefully terminated this enterprise of the Bianchi, owing to their own want of

firmness*. The good peacemaker, Pope Benedict, died at Perugia on the same day, the 22nd of July, 1304. And in the night between the 19th and 20th day of the same month, was Eletta Canigiani, the wife of Petracco dall' Ancisa (one of the exiles who took part in this expedition) delivered of a son, who was afterwards the poet Petrarch. Thus our two greatest poets belonged to the party of the Bianchi; and during the same period the first of them became illustrious in exile, and the second was born in exile†. In this biography there is not a distinguished person mentioned who was not at one time of his life an exile. Farinata degli Uberti, Brunetto Latini, Dante's ancestors, the Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia, Corso Donati, Vieri de' Cerchi, Uguccione della Faggiola, Ugolino della Gherardesca, the Polentas, Bosone da Gubbio, etc., all were exiles, and were great either on account of their banishment or in spite of it.

I believe that Dante did not accompany this Lastra expedition, for the same reason that I gave a short time before against his being one of the Commissioners who visited Florence. Perhaps the folly of this expedition, which was not unstained by some colour of perfidy, had separated him from his party. At any rate, at this time, or soon after, he abandoned it, and began, as he afterwards boasted, to make *a party by*

* Dino Com. pp. 128-130.

† Villani, pp. 405, 406. Veltro, pp. 72, 73. Ginguené Trad. tom. iii. p. 7.

himself. To the folly of this enterprise (undertaken almost treacherously while the chiefs of the opposite party were at the Papal court, and contrary to the will of the Pope*), together with the rash proceedings of Baschiera della Tosa, may be applied, better than to any other event, the scornful manner in which Dante speaks of the party of the Bianchi: "Most ungrateful, loathsome, impious, all shall set themselves against thee†."

In the issue shall their brutishness be shown ;

So will a greater fame redound to thee,

To have form'd a party by thyself alone,

Paradiso, c. 17, v. 67-69.

There seems to me that no doubt any longer remains on the truth of the commentary made upon these verses by the Anonymous contemporary, who adds a few particulars relating to Dante's last participation in the affairs of his party. "This happened when he reproved the Bianchi party, who had been expelled from Florence, for not having in the winter asked assistance from their friends ; and this he showed was the reason of their reaping little fruit ; for, on the *coming of summer*, they did not find *the friend* disposed to be as friendly to them as he had been in the winter ; whence Dante incurred much odium and anger from them, and *so he departed from them*. This is the meaning of what he says, that this

* Dino Com.

† *Paradiso*, c. 17, v. 63, 64.

party would give a proof of its brutishness ; and assuredly in many places they were exceedingly weak and wanting, as when they came to the city with the men of Romagna, as also at Piano and in many places, and at Pistoia and elsewhere*." It is in the first place clear that the Anonymous contemporary alluded to the expedition from Lastra to *the city*, and thus says that Dante separated from his party either at that time or after it, but at any rate on that account. Secondly, these words, "on the coming of summer the exiles did not find the friend disposed to be as friendly to them as he had been in the winter, whence Dante incurred much hatred and anger from them," might make one suppose that this friend was a Scaliger, no longer Bartolomeo, friendly and compliant to the demands of the ambassador Dante, but Alboino ; and this would best explain not only the anger of the exiles against Dante, but also Dante's own anger against Alboino.

We have seen, even from the beginning, the folly of the *party of the woods* or of the *ass of the gate*, and how Dante had joined it in spite of its folly, because it had shown itself more just, or rather less unjust, than the opposite party : and for this we have praised him ; but now that it had shown fresh and evident proofs of its folly, we cannot but approve of Dante's having finally abandoned it, and making a *party by himself* ; for though

* Ediz. Minerva, tom. iii. p. 440.

this could not be justifiable in a citizen living within a city distracted by factions, and still less in a public magistrate, it is certainly justifiable in an exile, and it is praiseworthy when his companions are armed against their common country. I dare say my readers, who must be like me wearied of so many divisions and subdivisions of the Florentine parties, and at seeing every evil enterprise successful and every good one unfortunate, will not be displeased at bidding, with our exile, a final adieu to Florence. There is no certain record to what place he now directed his steps. But Villani* tells us that soon after his banishment Dante went to the University of Bologna, and then to Paris, and to various parts of the world; and a residence at a university seeming to suit the present condition of the exile, who had ceased to participate in factions, and Boccaccio also making Bologna one of the first places at which the exiled Dante resided, there appears to remain little doubt that immediately or soon after the flight from Lastra, in July, 1304, Dante went to the neighbouring town of Bologna, and there, resuming his literary labours, he remained some time†.

We must assign to one of his sojourns in Tuscany

* Villani, p. 508.

† Leonardo Aretino (p. 57) makes Dante remain at Arezzo until after the Lastra expedition; and thus from March, 1302, to July, 1304, and only then, first go to Verona to the Lords of La Scala. But, first, this long residence at Arezzo is very improbable, or rather impossible, since all the exiles had been forced to leave it. Secondly, this account

Dante's stay in the Casentino, and his hospitable reception by Guido Salvatico, the cousin of Alessandro di Romena, the captain of the Lastra expedition and lord of Bagno and Montegranelli. At the request of Catharine, the wife of Guido Salvatico, Dante is said to have written some verses upon a friar*. But this visit is more certainly recorded in two passages of the *Commedia*; one relating to Guido Guerra, the uncle of his host, the other to the Abbey of San Benedetto in the Apennines, which was in the possession of Roggieri da Dovadola, the son of Guido Salvatico†.

Dante's visit to Faggiola, or to some other place belonging to Uguccione, may probably be referred to this time,—either before he went to Bologna or during his stay there. Uguccione was becoming more and more lukewarm in the cause of the Ghibellines, uniting himself more closely with Corso Donati, the ruler of Florence, and separating himself wider from the exiles; thence a friendship between him and Dante would be more closely cemented. We shall soon see Dante give a marked proof of this friendship, which will show that they must have seen each other, and lived on familiar

is contrary to memorials we have of the assistance sent from Verona to the expedition of 1303, through Dante's intervention. Thirdly, it is opposed to the commentary attributed to Dante's son Pietro, and to the best interpretations of the *Commedia* and the *Convito*, which all agree in making Dante the guest of Bartolomeo della Scala, and so having gone and lived at Verona before 1304, the date of Bartolomeo's death.

* Veltro, p. 73. Pelli, p. 134. Boccac. Vita di Dante.

† *Inferno*, c. 16, v. 84-89, 100-102.

terms, several times after their first meeting at Arezzo ; and this is mentioned by Boccaccio. But there is no document which fixes the precise date of this visit*.

* Ugucione's biographer (but I do not see on what foundation) fixes it at 1305, (Veltro, p. 76); and from the reminiscences of the *Commedia*, he mentions other places in that neighbourhood which Dante visited ; but this he might have done afterwards, when he was staying with the Ordelaffi.

CHAPTER IV.

BOLOGNA.—PADUA.—DANTE RESUMES HIS LITERARY
WORKS.—THE CONVITO.

1304-1306.

So failed the breath within my lungs, what time
I reached the height, that on a crag I sat,
No strength remaining other rocks to climb.
"Now must thou shake off sloth," my guide began;
"For not beneath rich canopies of state,
On beds of down, must fame be sought by man:
He who descends unhonour'd to the grave,
Leaves of himself on earth such vestige slight,
As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave."

Inferno, c. 24, v. 43-51.

Thus there is no doubt, that in the latter half of 1304, Dante went to the University of Bologna. It is again uncertain how long he remained there; but probably not later than the 1st of March, 1306, at which time the Bolognese, joining the Neri of Florence, expelled the exiled Bianchi; for this a Papal Legate laid an inter-

dict upon them and deprived their city of its university; he, like his predecessors, wished to act as a peacemaker, but failing, he fulminated excommunications*. It had been an ancient custom for the students of Bologna when expelled, on whatever account, from their university, to take refuge in that of Padua; and a few months afterwards we find Dante at Padua, and he had taken up there a settled abode. This is proved by a deed dated the 27th of August, 1306, concerning a certain lady Amata Papafava, in which Dante acted as a witness. "*Dantino quondam Aligeri de Florentia, et nunc stat Padue in contrata sancti Laurentii*†." A few days after this transaction we find Dante in the Lunigiana. Thus, whether at the University of Bologna or at that of Padua, we find that he spent two whole years in study, and took no longer any part in the factions of his fellow-citizens. He had called to him from Florence his oldest son Pietro‡, now entering into youth; and that may have been the principal cause of his residence at these universities. But he was also probably detained there by his own studies, which he now resumed.

The change from active life to one of contemplation, from the occupations that are imposed upon us by others, and must be followed up day by day, to those which are voluntary and are continued merely at our own plea-

* Veltro, p. 80. Murat. Ann. all' anno 1306. Villani, pp. 422-424.

† "Dante, formerly Alighieri of Florence, and now a resident at Padua, in the district of St. Laurence." Pelli, p. 115.

‡ Veltro, p. 78.

sure,—from the councils of war and state to the solitude of our own study, is a change often desired by statesmen; but it is in fact a change which it is difficult to bear well, and sometimes even to bear at all. Not a few public men have died in their retirement from the want of occupation; many have suffered from it both in body and mind, and almost all have sunk in public opinion. Few have maintained in the change the rank of intellect to which they had reached, and for which they were distinguished; still fewer have risen to greater glory in retirement. Perhaps Dante alone ascended from earth to heaven. Had it not been for his banishment, and his separation from his fellow-exiles, which might be called his second banishment, he would have probably never composed the noble works he did; and this especially refers to the *Commedia*. All his works, with the exception of the *Vita Nuova*, were written in exile, and in solitary exile. In all of them we see traces of his situation when he composed them; and those who can comprehend his versatile character, will understand what strength of purpose and what resolution he must have required, and what internal struggles and emotions of sorrow, hopes, and fears, they must have cost him. It is said that on his return from Verona, “he showed great humility, trying by good offices and a conciliatory deportment to obtain the favour of again returning to Florence, by the rulers of that town recalling him of their own accord. And for this object he laboured

much, and wrote many times not only to different citizens connected with the government, but even to the people itself; and among others a long letter, which begins thus,—‘*Popule mi, quid feci tibi*?*’ It is clear that these hopes of being restored to his country, and these conciliatory letters, belong to the period between 1304 and 1306, and were contemporaneous with his return to a life of study and with his residence at the universities of Bologna and Padua. And there are proofs of this new though transitory feeling, in several of his poems of uncertain date, and in the works he undertook and resumed about this time.

If we pay due attention to the dates mentioned in the *Convito*, and to the whole nature of the work, which is almost a continuation of the *Vita Nuova*, we can scarcely doubt that it was one of the first writings he now undertook. Some have even supposed that part of it was written in Florence; but this conjecture seems to me to be founded upon very doubtful interpretations; it explains nothing, and it ought to be rejected from internal evidence, as the whole book is written in a Ghibelline spirit, and consequently by Dante when he was an exile. The work as it exists could not have been written before his exile, as it particularly alludes to it†. That it was written

* My people, what have I done to thee?—(TRANSL.) Leon. Aret. p. 57. Witte, Ep. 2, 3.

† The rich but discordant dissertations of Triulzi in the *Minerva* edition, Padua, 1827; Solari, in the Appendix to the edition of 1828;

before the *Volgare Eloquio* and the *Monarchia* is clear, from finding in the *Convito* the germs of these two works; for an author does not usually pass from a developed idea to one in embryo. That it was written before the *Commedia* is certain from passages in the latter, which correct many opinions expressed in the *Convito**; and as Giovanni di Monferrato, who died in 1305, is spoken of in the *Convito* as alive, it must have been written before that date†. I think we may consider it as a certain fact that this work was written in the early years of his banishment, perhaps while he was wandering with the other exiles; perhaps during his first short stay at Verona; but more probably in his longer tranquil residences at Bologna and Padua; certainly not later. This will appear still clearer after we have

and Fraticelli, in the Florentine edition of 1834, may be referred to. The great argument to prove that the first Treatise of the *Convito* was written in 1313 is the manner in which Dante, in it, speaks of the different parts of Italy through which he had passed during his exile, and that he could scarcely have spoken thus before 1313. But we know that in 1304 Dante had already travelled through Tuscany, Romagna, and Lombardy, and that between 1305 and 1316 he visited no other countries of Italy, except the two Rivieras of Genoa, and Udine. It appears to me that this first Treatise bears upon itself, more than the others, the date of 1304; for he speaks in it of the *Volgare Eloquio* as of a work merely designed; and we shall see it was begun in 1305.

* The opinion regarding the spots in the Moon, expressed in the *Convito*, Treatise ii. chap. 14, is corrected in the *Paradiso*, c. 2, and c. 22. The opinion regarding the order of the celestial spirits ruling the spheres, expressed in the *Convito*, Treatise ii. chap. 6, is corrected in the *Paradiso*, c. 8, v. 34; c. 28, v. 134.

† Veltro, pp. 77, 78.

examined the work itself, which, singular and puerile in its plan, bears evident marks of an unpractised author, although from time to time it is resplendent with thoughts which do not disgrace the writer of the *Divina Commedia*.

My readers will not have forgotten, I hope, the compassionate lady, whom Dante fell in love with soon after the death of Beatrice, which love he discarded, "driving away this wicked thought and desire," and again devoting all his thoughts to "the most charming Beatrice*." They also remember that some verses addressed to this lady were placed by Dante in the *Vita Nuova*. But, besides these, he wrote not a few others, and among them the three *Canzoni* which begin with these beautiful lines:—

"Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete."
(Ye who by intellect the third heaven move.)

"Amor che nella mente m'è ragiona."
(Love, who discourses to me in my mind.)

"Le dolci rime d'amor ch'io solia."
(The pleasant rhymes of Love that I was wont.)

In the first of these canzoni ("Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete"), Dante speaks of the two passions which were struggling within his bosom,—his love to his mistress, who was dead to the earth but living in heaven, and his love to the compassionate lady. In the second

* *Vita Nuova*, p. 69. See Part I. Chap. VII.

canzone ("Amor che nella mente mi ragiona"), he praises the object of his new love; and in the third ("Le dolci rime d'amor ch'io solia"), he addresses to her a eulogy on nobleness of character. Eleven other canzoni, which we do not possess or do not know where to find, spoke perhaps likewise of her, or of other objects of his love. Dante being now an exile, and devoted to study, and perhaps having some idea of recommencing his votive poem to Beatrice, was induced to enter into rather a long commentary upon these fourteen canzoni; by which he explained that when he seemed to speak, according to the literal sense, of this lady, his second love, he meant allegorically to speak of his love to philosophy; and that where we read the word *Love*, we must understand *Study*; where *Lady*, we must understand *Philosophy*; where *the third heaven of Venus*, we must understand *Rhetoric*, the third science of the Trivium; where *Angels*, the rulers of that planet, we must understand *Boethius* and *Tully*, who are to be considered in short as his only comforters*. I leave my readers to form what judgement they please of the truth of this commentary, but I maintain that when the author explains the literal and allegorical senses of each

* See the general intention of the whole Commentary in the first, second and third chapters of the first Treatise, at pp. 6, 12, and 13 of the Minerva edition. But in the Appendix to that edition a serious error has crept in, which has been reproduced in the new Florentine edition. In the second Treatise Beatrice is made to represent philosophy, whereas it really was the other lady.

canzone separately, his explanation of its literal sense is always clear and beautiful, but his explanation of the allegorical is always obscure, forced, involved, and contradictory.

The work, finished as it is by these three canzoni as early as the year 1304, was thrown aside by the author; and as he never resumed it during the seventeen remaining years of his life, so he probably did not consider it good enough to finish. Whoever is determined to give entire credit to the *Convito*, must discredit his principal work, the *Commedia*, which Dante composed with his whole heart, and entirely completed; he must also discredit Beatrice's reproaches and Dante's confession of his errors,—reproaches and a confession which bear the seal of truth and spontaneous feeling, much more than these forced apologies. For my part, I prefer believing in the *Commedia*. Besides, one would not willingly suppose that Dante had any determined intention to deceive. Even in the beginning of the *Convito* he asserts, "that in no part of it does he intend in any way to derogate" from the *Vita Nuova*; he does not say that it is only to be understood in an allegorical sense, but on the contrary he begins to show what the literal sense is; and in short he has done no more than what others before and after him have done, and among others Tasso, in throwing an allegory over his finished works. But, observe, he does not veil his love for Beatrice in any allegory; he does

so in the *Commedia*, but we shall see the reason of this in its proper place.

Dante calls this work the *Convito* or Banquet, an ill-imagined name, which means nothing; whereas in the titles he gives to his other works, though their sense may be at first obscure, when it is once penetrated they are always profound, complete, and suitable. He calls the *Convito* a dish of knowledge, which he has prepared for his readers, but he in no manner alludes to a similar title given by Plato to his famous Dialogue; as this treats also of love, some have supposed that Dante's work was an imitation of it. I do not know whether there was then any Latin translation of Plato, and it is probable that the title alone, at the utmost, was known to Dante. Perhaps having a confused notion that Plato had written a dialogue on love, in which he had exalted its spirituality, Dante wished to give the same title to his own treatise on the same subject. If he imitated it in any way, it was merely in name; and as much as Dante's treatise is inferior in art, so it is undoubtedly superior in modesty, to the Greek dialogue, to the disgrace, if not of Plato, at least of the age and of the state of civilization in which he wrote.

The first treatise of the *Convito* is merely a preface, in which, using a poor metaphor, he says that he will wipe out the defects that may be attached to his dish; and these are egotism and the use of the Italian language or vulgar tongue. Dante's defence of the use of

the Italian language is very beautiful; but even this is spoiled by subtleties, and it is not to be compared to that which he wrote upon it in the *Volgare Eloquio**, after his thoughts on that subject had been developed. What he says in apology for his egotism is still more beautiful. "Ah, might it have pleased the Dispenser of the Universe that the cause of my apology had never been! that neither others should have wronged me, nor that I should have unjustly suffered punishment,—the punishment I say of exile and poverty. Since it was the pleasure of Florence, that most beautiful and celebrated daughter of Rome, to cast me forth from her gentle bosom (in which I had been fostered to the prime of life, and in which, with her good leave, I desire with my whole heart to repose my weary soul, and to finish the time allotted to me), through almost all parts where this language is spoken have I been a wanderer, and almost a beggar, showing against my will the wound inflicted on me by fortune, for which the wounded themselves are too often unjustly accused. Truly I have been a ship without sails and without helm, borne to different ports and bays and coasts, by the dry wind exhaled by sad poverty; and I have appeared vile in the eyes of many, who perhaps from my fame had imagined me otherwise; and in the sight of these my condition is not only debased, but every work that I have written, and

* *De Vulgari Eloq.* c. 5, etc.

shall write, have become of little value*. . . . Whence, since thus, as I have said above, I have shown myself to all the Italians, whereby I have perhaps made myself seem more vile than agrees with the truth, not only to those to whom my fame had already reached, but also to others, and as my condition doubtless is somewhat improved, it is proper for me by a more lofty style to give somewhat of gravity to the present work, whereby it may wear greater authority; and let this apology suffice for the stiffness of my commentary†."

Here we perceive the gentle and mild sentiments which he had already expressed in those conciliatory letters which were written about this time.

The Second Treatise is a commentary on the first canzone, and it is here that Dante accomplishes his intention, of explaining away and turning into an allegory that Love which he now denies. Here we find a profession of his belief in the immortality of the soul, and, among similar professions given us by philosophers, I know of none which exceeds it in beauty; it shows us how far removed Dante was from the Epicureans of his day; and it is especially beautiful from the tender emotions with which he is inspired, and with which he begins and ends. Thus my readers must not be displeased if I quote this passage at its full length, and they must pardon what Dante says in it relating to

* Convito, Tratt. I. cap. iii. pp. 13, 14.

† Ibid. cap. iv. p. 18.

dreams,—Dante, who had found consolation in them, and who a short time before tells us of the revelation of his mistress's immortality, that he had received in a dream.

“But because I have here alluded to the immortality of the soul, I shall make a digression to discourse about it: because such discourse will be a worthy conclusion of what I have been saying of that Beatrice, who now lives and is blessed in heaven, of whom I do not intend to speak more in this book. As a preface I assert that, among all gross errors, the most absurd, degrading, and injurious is the belief that after this life there is no other life. Because if we turn over all the writings of the philosophers, as well as of other learned writers, we see that all agree in this, that there is a part within us which is eternal; and this seems to be strongly laid down by Aristotle, in his book on *the Soul*: this seems to be laid down by all the Stoics: this seems to have been especially laid down by Tullius, in his little book on *Old Age* *. This seems to have been laid down by every poet who has spoken according to the faith of the Gentiles; and this is laid down by every law, whether of the Jew, the Saracen, or the Tartar, and by all who have been governed according to any reasonable rule.

* This confirms our observation that Dante was not acquainted with the works of Plato, for he does not quote them here; although not only in the *Phædon*, but in all his writings, more than in those of any of the ancients, Plato has proved, as far as was then possible, the immortality of the soul.

For if all had been deceived an impossibility must ensue, which even to picture to oneself would be horrible. Every one is assured that human nature is the most perfect of all other natures here below; and this no one denies, and Aristotle affirms it, when he says in his twelfth book on animals that man is the most perfect of all animals. Thence, though many have passed through life who have died like brute animals, and have been while they lived entirely without this hope, that is of another life*, still, if our hope were vain, we should be greatly more defective than any other animal, since many men have given up this life for that hope. So it would follow that the most perfect animal, that is man, would be the most imperfect, which is impossible; and that that part of him, reason, which is his greatest perfection, would be the cause of his being most defective, which on the whole appears a contradiction. And it would also follow that Nature has implanted this hope in the human understanding, which is in opposition to herself, Nature; for it is said that many have sought for the death of their bodies in order to pass into another life; and that Nature should have done thus is also impossible. Again, we have a continual experience of our immortality in the divinations of our dreams, which could not be if we had no immortal part within us;

* Here Dante seems to me unintelligible, and probably there is some error in the text of the *Convito*. Let future editors see how this may be corrected.

since immortal must be that which reveals, whether he be corporeal or incorporeal, if we think it over subtly (I speak of corporeal and incorporeal on account of the different opinions I find on this point), and he who receives this revelation, and has direct information, must bear some affinity to the informer, and there is no affinity between the mortal and the immortal. Again, we are assured of it by the true doctrines of Christ (who is the way, the truth, and the light; the way, because by him, without any impediment, we arrive at the happiness of that immortality; the truth, because he suffers no error; the light, because he enlightens us amidst the darkness of worldly ignorance); these doctrines of Christ, I repeat, assure us of it beyond all other reasoning, because He has given it who sees and measures our immortality, which we cannot see perfectly while our immortal part is mixed up with mortality; but we see it by faith perfectly; and by reason we see it with a shade of obscurity which encounters us, by the mixture of mortality with immortality. And this ought to be a most potent argument, that we have both these natures within us; and this I believe, and this I affirm, and of this I am certain, that after this life we shall go to another and a better one, to that place where that glorious lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured*."

The Third Treatise expounds the second canzone in praise of the lady his second love, whom he now trans-

* Convito, Tratt. II. cap. ix. p. 90.

forms into Philosophy; and it seems to me to have all the defects, without the beauties, that are scattered here and there in the second. Whatever there is in it important to the history of Dante's loves, has been introduced by us in its proper place.

The Fourth Treatise is most remarkable for a new quibble built upon the others. "It ought to be known that Frederick of Suabia*, the last Emperor of the Romans (I say the last as regards the present time, notwithstanding that Rudolph, Adolphus, and Albert were elected Emperors after his death, and that of his descendants†), being asked *what was nobility?* answered, that it consisted in *ancient wealth and fine manners*. And I say that this was not well understood by some, who, having thought and turned over in their mind this definition in all ways, omitted the last part of the sentence, that is *the fine manners*, and only maintained the first part, that is *ancient wealth*‡." Dante, although a noble, was a Guelf, and he had joined the *popolani* or burghers, and belonged to the Guelf and popular government of Florence; he had written a canzone on this speech, in which, with excellent philosophical arguments, though (as it often happens in such disquisitions) in perhaps some of the worst verses

* The Emperor Frederick II., of the Line of Suabia.

† This alone proves that the fourth treatise was written during the reign of Albert, and thus before the year 1307.

‡ Convito, Tratt. IV. cap. iii. p. 218.

he ever wrote, he had refuted that opinion so full of the pride of the Imperial or Ghibelline party. Nor now in his discussion upon this canzone does he disavow what he had written, being a man of far too noble virtue to wish to deceive himself, and to attribute real nobility either to wealth or family. But he had become a Ghibelline, and scruples had arisen in his breast; and he undertakes to prove that he has not committed the irreverent sin of contradicting an emperor. Perhaps he principally enters into this apology to have an opportunity of magnifying the imperial dignity, the Empire of Rome, and the Monarchy, by which he always means universal monarchy, and the supremacy of one single emperor throughout the world. But at any rate the unhappy and irritated Poet has here made a great and unfortunate change of opinion. As we a little while back perceived in the *Convito* the first origin of the *Volgare Eloquentia*, here we perceive that of the *Monarchia*; in the *Monarchia* itself however this argument is more properly developed, more plainly treated, and also in a more moderate spirit, than in the *Convito*, by his placing the spiritual power of the Pope in opposition to this universal temporal power. But we will speak of that in its proper place.

On the whole, the *Convito* is certainly inferior to all the rest of Dante's works. It has not the simple youthfulness of the *Vita Nuova*, and almost all his detached poems; it has not, like the *Volgare Eloquentia* and the

Monarchia, important ends for its object; nor can it in any manner be compared with the *Commedia*. It was the work of an unhappy man, who had been cast from a life of tranquillity, amid the vicissitudes, miseries, and mortifications of exile; he wished to return to study, and he sought it, but he did not yet feel himself strong enough to resume the great work which he had imagined in better times; so he dwelt on the thoughts and the compositions of his youth; he commented on them, explained and justified them, besides adding to them the new ideas which had accumulated in his fertile brain, but as yet were unformed, and by which he continued to be oppressed, until he was able to express them in a better manner. And when he had explained these ideas in other works, he laid the *Convito* aside, and in so doing he did well. It is, in short, nothing more than a rough sketch which the author abandoned.

But it is an important relic, inasmuch as it gives us much information relating to Dante's life, and above all as it throws light on the *Commedia*, which even in the first verse would be somewhat incomprehensible, had it not been for the explanation of the ages of man which we find in the *Convito**. It is most important by its explaining Dante's own meaning for his allegories, and how various these are, and how they never in any way

* Tratt. IV. csp. xxiii. xxiv. etc. Dante divides the ages of man thus:—*Pueritia*, boyhood, 1 to 10; *Adolescenza*, adolescence, 10 to 25; *Gioventute*, youth, 25 to 45; *Senectute*, old-age, 45 to 70; *Senio*, decrepitude, 70 to 80.

destroy the literal sense,—an application which is followed up by the example here given of Dante's having made this a commentary on his own writings. The *Convito* ought to be the manual of all commentators of the *Commedia**.

* If the opinions expressed here upon the date of the *Convito*, its object, and how it may be viewed in relation to Dante's other works, are considered just, we shall see that a properly illustrated edition of it is wanting. But the *Minerva* and *Florence* editions with Solari's appendix will be valuable assistance for all future labours.

CHAPTER V.

DE VULGARI ELOQUIO.—POPE CLEMENT V. AND
POLITICAL PARTIES.

1304-1306.

O thou, the glory of the Latin race,
 . . . by whom our tongue its force display'd.

Purgatorio, c. 7, v. 17, 18.

SOME, in judging of books, attach more weight to the learning the author displays, than to the service he renders his readers. Such critics admire the *Convito*, because it shows Dante to have been learned in the astronomy, theology, and philosophy of his times; and say that, even had we not possessed the *Commedia*, the *Convito* would have been quite sufficient to prove his great erudition. But it is certain that no one would have gone to seek for it there, perhaps not even the historians of these sciences, who would have found more precise data relating to them in the authors who have

made them their especial study. Books which are really glorious to the author are those which are really useful to his readers, and such are those only which have advanced a step in some science or art. Such undoubtedly was Dante's Treatise on the Italian Language or Vulgar Idiom; he wrote it in Latin, and (if I am not mistaken) in better Latin than usual; his design was that it should consist of four books, but he only completed two.

That he undertook this work in 1304, and that before January, 1305, he had arrived at the twelfth chapter of the first book, is clear, from finding William, Marquis of Monferrat (who died in that month), mentioned there as living*. Nor do I see any reason to suppose that the rest of the work was of a much later date†. It also appears to me probable that it was written in Bologna, from his speaking in such high terms of praise of that city and its dialect‡; for it is a good rule in the criticism of Dante's works, and conformable to his character, that we may infer the time and place of each of his works, when we have not more certain information, from the impressions apparent in them.

The title *De Vulgari Eloquentia sive Idiomate*, which old writers have translated by "On Vulgar Eloquence,"

* Veltro, p. 78.

† Villani's words, (Lib. IX., c. 54, p. 508,) which are often brought forward in contradiction of this, are merely said incidentally and doubtfully.

‡ Vulgari Eloq. Lib. I. cap. ix.-xv.

would I think have been better rendered, "On the Vulgar Idiom," that is on the Italian language*. It was then quite a new subject to undertake; it was afterwards often treated, but in a far inferior manner. He begins with the origin of human speech, and the division of it into languages; and, if he does not sufficiently enlarge on these two most important questions of philosophy and philology, he at least does not treat them erroneously†; when he comes to the dialects of *Roman-barbaric* Europe, he divides them into three (in the manner we have already pointed out), according to the three affirmations of *oc*, *oil*, and *st*‡; then when he begins to discuss the language of *st*§, or the Italian language, he does not treat it, as many have erroneously done, either merely as a language belonging to the whole country, or as a dialect of one part of it, which had come into general use, but he distinguishes and enumerates fourteen dialects then spoken in the peninsula; he examines and appreciates the merits and demerits of each, and then draws this conclusion, that from all these ought to be derived that general language, which he calls *illustrious*, *cardinal*, *aulic*, and *curial*||. All who

* The first lines of the first chapter would make one certainly most approve of the old translation, but the lines that follow after—indeed the whole book, and the Latin title attached to it—ought to make one perhaps accept the second.

† *Vulgari Eloquio*, cap. i.-vii.

§ Cap. ix.-xv.

‡ Cap. viii. ix.

|| Cap. xvi.-xviii.

have till now followed and written commentaries on Dante have directed their whole attention to this conclusion, and have argued upon it, with various and probably endless arguments, neglecting to praise him and to imitate him, in what he says on the Italian dialects, which is perhaps the most remarkable part of the whole treatise. Some despise this subject, and others fear to enter upon it. But contempt has no power against facts. And it is an undeniable fact that these dialects existed in Dante's time, and have continued to exist down to the present day, and that they were not only spoken but even written at all times; as we find in several Romanesque, Apulian, Venetian, and Piedmontese chronicles, in translations from Tasso, and in many popular songs, and lastly in Goldoni's Comedies, and in the lyrical and satirical poems of Meli, Calvi, Porta, Grossi, and others, which might sometimes have excited the envy of Italian literature itself, and shown that an attachment to its native dialects has always been warmly felt in every province of Italy. As regards the apprehension that the cultivation of its provincial dialects, or merely the discussion of the subject, might injure that single language which is the only possession that is common to us all as Italians, if it were founded on any just grounds, we ought indeed religiously to abstain from such a study. But as the use of these dialects is entirely confined to popular subjects, which at any rate could not be written in a studied language, it cannot

injure the purity of the Italian; and to add to the innocent intellectual pleasures, and to the mental cultivation of any of the Italian population, can in no way injure Italy. The dread of historical disquisitions on the origin of our dialects is still less just; but, since Dante, such disquisitions have not been attempted, except perhaps by the great Muratori, who was superior to his contemporaries, and to many of those who have come after him. It is not necessary to point out the value of a book written as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, and by a man like Dante, on these two subjects, the origin of modern languages, and the difference between the various Italian dialects. It would be an interesting subject for a modern writer to resume, adding what has been supplied by the advancement of knowledge to what has been given us by Dante and Muratori.

I cannot entirely avoid alluding to Dante's conclusion, that what he calls the general or illustrious language should be derived from the whole of the other dialects, but I shall do so briefly. All languages have undoubtedly been derived from the different dialects spoken in different parts of the same nation, which have maintained these undetermined and various forms, until one of them has become the sovereign, or at least the principal language. But there is a great difference between those nations which have, and those which have not, a capital where government and refinement are centralized. In the former the language which is spoken in the chief

city is the model of that of the provinces; and even if one part of the city takes a lead above the rest of it, owing to a resident court or parliament, it also assumes an authority over their language. This was the case with the old language of Italy, Latin, which was regulated by the *Urbanitas*, that is to say, by the taste of the city of Rome; this has been the case also with the modern Spanish, French, and English languages. On the contrary, among nations which do not possess a capital, although one of the dialects becomes the principal language (as it is impossible that all the dialects should equally contribute to its formation), yet its authority, unassisted as it is by the centralization of civil institutions, is originally less determined and is constantly disputed. Such was the case with ancient Greece, and such is the case with modern Italy; for in this, as in many other things, the vicissitudes of our destinies have made us endure, both in ancient and modern times, experiments of every kind, and have caused us to give the world various examples. We have already stated that the Florentine was not the first of the Italian dialects in which poetry or prose was written; for the early seats of Italian literature were the Sicilian court of Frederick II. and the University of Bologna; but we have also stated how this literature passed over to Florence, what progress it made there, how Dante was not its only son, nor even its eldest son, but that he holds in it the first rank. In the thirteenth chapter of the Vol-

gare Eloquentio we may see how the Tuscans, even in his time, boasted of their dialect being the principal language of Italy. This boast of pre-eminence naturally took deeper root when, through the fame of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and many others who lived during the two following centuries, Florence took the lead in Italian literature.

Was Dante then wrong in not recognising the pre-eminence of his own Tuscan dialect, which was thus claimed by his contemporaries? I think so, but he might have been led into this error by this pre-eminence being of a late date and not generally acknowledged till after his death, and then on account of his genius; it might have been also owing to his enlarged, and, we may call it, eclectic nature, which made him embrace all sciences, write in all styles, accept all dialects, and select from these, and even from foreign languages, any word that he found adapted to his subject. Nor have we any reason to accuse Dante of the narrow and base desire of avenging himself on his native city, by thus depriving her of the boast of possessing the pre-eminence in language. Passionate persons are seldom revengeful, and those who express themselves loudly and openly in words do not avenge themselves by covert and indirect ways. The *Volgare Eloquentio*, which has been by some cited as the fruit of Dante's wrath, is in fact absolutely free from any attacks against Florence; whether it was that his fierce but noble spirit thought proper to abstain from these

attacks when he was pronouncing a sentence against her in thus depriving her of her boasted pre-eminence in language, or because this book, like the *Convito*, was written at a time when he felt more mildly,—in one of those moments of love and longing from which no exile, at least no virtuous exile, ever escapes. The following passage, in which he apologizes for not making the Florentine language the most ancient in the world, certainly does not breathe a spirit of vengeance, and may excuse him in some degree for not having granted it the pre-eminence. “But we, to whom the world is a country as the sea is to the fishes, although we have drunk the waters of the Arno before we had teeth, and although we love Florence so much, that for having loved her we suffer an unjust exile, nevertheless we must rest the shoulders of our judgement more on reason than on sentiment. And, though for our pleasure, or rather for the tranquillizing of our senses, there is no place in the world more delightful than Florence, still if we turn over the volumes of poets and other authors in which the world is generally or particularly described, and if we go over the different parts of the world and their inhabitants, between the two poles and the equatorial circle, I firmly understand and believe that there may be many regions and cities more noble and delightful than Tuscany and Florence, in which I was born and of which I am a citizen; and that there may be many nations and many races who speak a more beautiful and more useful

language than the Italians*.” Moreover in the *Vita Nuova*, written in Dante’s youth when he was in love with a daughter of Florence, and before he had cause for irritation, he did not give to this city or to Tuscany any pre-eminence in language; and, had it been his opinion, he would then certainly have done so willingly. Whether this opinion was right or wrong, it was not the effect of irritation. Since this question has become mixed up with Dante’s love for his country, we must here state that his patriotism was in the first place for the whole of Italy, but that this did not injure his attachment to his own city; he is in this respect superior to those whose love for Italy seems to diminish that they feel towards their own particular provinces, as if they could have been Italians without having first been Piedmontese, Lombards, Tuscans, Neapolitans, etc. Dante, having enlarged and manly affections, could admire and praise foreign languages and provincial dialects as well as his own national language, and he could also love and praise as well as blame, with the heart of a lover, Italy, Tuscany, and Florence—three forms of patriotism which are comprehended within one another.

All the questions we have here touched upon are treated in the first book of the *Volgare Eloquio*, which is the most important part of the work as regards the history of our language as well as of Dante’s life and opinions. In the second book he writes as if he had lost some of

* Lib. I. cap. vi. pp. 251, 252.

his love to the subject, and even was weary of it. He first enquires what persons and what things ought to be treated of in the vernacular tongue*. Having passed over prose, he discusses the three descriptions of poems then written in the Italian or vulgar dialect,—*sonetti*, *ballate*, and *canzoni*†; he considers that it ought above all to be used in writing canzoni, as the most worthy of the three; and then, confining his discourse to these, he divides it into ten heads, and goes so deep into the subject that he at last loses himself, and leaves the tragic or most lofty style incomplete, and the elegiac and comic styles, the two others that ought to follow, unattempted‡. This work, like the *Convito*, serves as an interpretation to Dante's great work, and especially to its title of *Commedia*, as well as to its style and general intention. But we may see that, having settled his own ideas in the course of writing, the author becomes weary of this work, so disproportioned to his genius and still more disproportioned to the ever increasing tumult of his ideas. In this second book we perceive a sign of the longings of an exile for his country. To give an idea of the construction of words, which he calls *sapida*, he in-

* Lib. II. cap. i. and ii.

† *Sonetti*, sonnets, a form of lyrical poem in rhyme. A sonnet consists of fourteen lines of eleven syllables each, and it is divided into two quatrains and two tercets. *Canzone* is a form of lyrical poetry consisting of many stanzas, and all the stanzas generally have the same versification. *Ballata* originally was a canzone which was sung during a dance. (TRANSL.)

‡ Lib. II. cap. iii.—xiii.

troduces the following phrase as an example:—"I grieve over all sufferers, but I have most pity for those, whoever they may be, who, languishing (*tabescentes*) in exile, never again see their country except in dreams*."

Another passage must be observed, in which, while he points out on what subjects the principal poets of his age wrote, and says that Cino of Pistoia sang of love, he says that he, Dante, whom he calls the friend of Cino, sang of *rectitude*,—a fine subject truly, and this agrees with the subjects he treats of in the canzoni of the *Convito*, or at least with his philosophical interpretation of them. The *Convito* and the *Volgare Eloquio* must have been in some degree contemporaneous; the former is a very indifferent composition, the latter, although far superior to it, was still beneath his genius; and thus Dante, having abandoned the *Convito* for the *Volgare Eloquio*, soon gave up the latter for the composition which originated in his days of youth, and love, and virtue. We shall see that, according to all records, it was an accident that induced him to resume this exalted labour; but it was an accident seconded by the dispositions of his mind, and by the early studies which he had resumed. Already in the *Vita Nuova* he speaks forcibly of the power of the Italian language, he returns to the subject in the *Convito*, and resolves to write expressly upon it, and lays aside the *Convito* for that purpose, and

* *Cap. iv. p. 204.*

begins the *Volgare Eloquio*. But he was interrupted in this new work by fresh accidents incidental to his banishment; and when he again resumed his literary pursuits, of the three unfinished compositions, the *Commedia*, the *Convito*, and the *Volgare Eloquio*, he preferred the first, as far the sublimest, the greatest, and the most difficult. But his ideas on the vulgar tongue were much matured since he first undertook the *Commedia*; and he resumed it with so much the more zest, as he felt himself freed from the shackles of the Latin language, and even from any subjection to his native dialect. Some may say that Dante, when he had shaken off this yoke, allowed himself not only liberty but license; but they may say what they please of his theory, for it will be pardoned by all for the sake of the use that he made of it. The *Divina Commedia* is in the Florentine dialect, without pedantically excluding all others.

Nor was Dante merely free from pedantry in his style of writing; we must repeat that he was free from that worst kind of pedantry which is entirely absorbed in study, and gives its entire preference to a contemplative life, disregarding and even despising a life of activity. His devotion to literature and study did not, to use a familiar phrase, *nail him to his chair*; and, more than this, it is certain that on his journeys, amid the fields, the mountains, and the valleys, ideas arose which contributed to his works. Of this there would be sufficient proof in the various descriptions of particular places with which

the *Commedia* is jewelled; but in addition to these, he has every description of every kind of landscape, and of every hour of the day, every effect of light and sound, and I would almost say of all those natural phenomena which are only observed by those who know how to live in the open air. There is something especially solemn in his description of the feelings of the traveller at evening, at the first sound of the Ave Maria.

It was the hour that wakes regret anew
 In men at sea, and melts the heart to tears,
 The day whereon they bade sweet friends adieu,
 And thrills the youthful pilgrim on his way
 With thoughts of love, if from afar he hears
 The vesper bell that mourns the dying day.
Purgatorio, c. 8, v. 1-6.

The other description of the Ave Maria, or *Angelus* of the morning, is equal if not superior to it, and the sound of its bells Dante compares to the rotatory movement of some of the blessed spirits in Paradise*.

Then like a clock that summons us away,
 What time the Spouse of God at matin hour
 Hastes to her Husband, for his love to pray †,
 And one part urges on the other, sounding
 'Tin Tin' in notes so sweet, that by its power
 The soul is thrill'd, with pious love abounding;

* This passage loses much in the translation, but I cannot agree with Count Balbo in thinking even the original at all to be compared in beauty to the passage he has just quoted from the *Purgatorio*. (TRANSL.)

† Here he alludes to the Matins of the Nuns.

So I beheld that glorious circle move ;
And with such sweet accord and harmony
Take up the song of praise, as none may prove,
Save where is joy through all eternity.

Paradiso, c. 10, v. 139-148.

From 1304 to 1306 we find Dante in tranquillity and study ; and though he may possibly have been in other places, we know for certain that he spent some if not all of his time with his son Pietro at the universities of Bologna and Padua. At this last city we have found him acting as a witness in a private transaction on the 27th of August, 1306. Thirty-nine days later we find him engaged in negotiations on the opposite shores of Italy ; nor can we give any probable conjecture for this change of place, without recalling all that was going on in this peninsula during the two years that Dante passed in retirement, but not in indifference to public affairs.

The good Pope Benedict XI. died, as we have already mentioned, on the 22nd of July, 1304, at Perugia, where he had spent most of his short reign,—whether it were to be nearer to Tuscany, or because the residence at Rome was unpleasing to him on account of the continual factions between the Colonnas and the Orsini, who alternately ruled there. It was said that he died from some poisoned figs, which were brought him by a youth disguised as a lay sister ; and this poison was attributed by some to those Cardinals who were his enemies, and by others to the King of France. The Cardinals who were

assembled in Conclave were so divided among themselves, that, although kept in confinement and almost starved, they could not agree upon the election until the 23rd of July, 1305. And it was certainly one of the most scandalous elections that was ever witnessed. The Cardinals were divided into two parties: at the head of the one were an Orsini and Francesco Gaetani, a nephew of Boniface VIII., who stood up for his memory and desired an Italian Pope; at the head of the other party were Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, the peacemaker of Tuscany, and Cardinal Napoleon Orsini, and they were both partisans of France. They at last settled that the former party should propose three French Bishops, and that the latter should select one of these three to be Pope. Three Frenchmen who had been creatures of Boniface, and who had till now been enemies of Philip, were of course named. But Philip, by the assistance of the Cardinals on his side, had time to visit one of the three proposed, Bertrand de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux; and showing him that it was in his (the King's) power to make him Pope, made him swear that if he became so he would grant him six requests, which were these:—to absolve him for his ill-usage of Boniface; to condemn the memory of that Pope; to replace in the Sacred College two Colonnas who had been expelled from it; to make other Cardinals by the choice of the King of France; to give up to him, Philip, the tithes due to the French clergy for five years; and, worse than all, he spoke of a sixth article which he would

explain in its proper time. Bertrand swore to all, and he became Clement V.; he never entered Rome or Italy, not only because they were distasteful to him from the factions which prevailed there, but because every party was now against him, and he could scarcely trust himself out of France. And he not only remained there himself, but by creating French cardinals, and other Frenchmen being elected by these as his successors, France became and continued the residence of the Popes for seventy years.

How this absence diminished the Pope's power and authority, both in his character of Italian prince and chief Pontiff, has been observed by many, though not perhaps sufficiently by any modern authors. We must refer to contemporary writers, to understand the indignation of the good and the triumph of the bad at this unnatural, unprecedented, and dangerous translation of the Holy See, to which was then given the name of the *Babylonian Captivity*. Therefore it is not Rome, as many injuriously interpret, but Avignon and its court, which has been called Babylon by Dante and Petrarch. This translation did little less than destroy the whole work completed by Gregory VII. and his successors in the course of two centuries; for it accustomed the people to see, and the princes to desire, the Pope's absence from Rome, and contributed to, or rather caused, the long schism of the West,—that schism which was the origin of the Councils of Pisa and Constance, and more than any other

thing the origin of the heresies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and thus of that Reformation which has lasted until our own times, and which separates so many precious members from the sacred body of Christianity. Thus it is that we should not only excuse, but, if we may be permitted to judge by the most approved historians of our Church, we should rather praise, Dante for having turned against Clement V. and his French successors, who were the first promoters of so much evil. The Popes of Dante's time deserved his disapprobation, and we do not blame him for his censure of Boniface, Clement V., and John, but for omitting to praise the good Benedict XI. and his many great and noble predecessors, which he ought in justice to have done.

The political misfortunes of Italy from this translation were most serious. We have shown how the Neapolitan sovereigns of the House of Anjou and the other French princes, now headed the Guelf party in place of the Popes. From the date of the outrage committed at Anagni, this supremacy had been a real tyranny, which had been hardly interrupted by the virtuous and brief reign of Benedict XI. And this is another cause for Dante's wrath against these princes, and the party now attached to the foreigner. The Pope himself, and even the French Popes, and their Legates and Cardinals, although in the service of France, were sometimes roused to resistance by the excesses of her tyranny, and from time to time almost proved themselves Ghibellines,

This we must bear in mind, to understand the vicissitudes of these factions during the years 1305 and 1306. Bologna, Pistoia, Pisa, and Arezzo, all belonged to the Bianchi-Ghibellines. Florence, in the midst of them and opposed to them all, was Neri Guelf; she was supported by Lucca alone, and yet she did not only defend herself, but acted on the offensive. On the 26th of May, 1305, the Florentines advanced to the attack of Pistoia, which was the stronghold of the banished Bianchi, who had for their captain the valiant and resolute Tolosato degli Uberti. The Florentine army was led by Robert, Duke of Calabria, now, by the death of Carlo Martello, the eldest son of the King of Naples. The Lucchese came and encamped on the other side of the city, and the siege was established. In September the newly elected Pope Clement sent two Legates to endeavour to make peace, and to forbid the siege. The Duke of Calabria obeyed, and departed, but the Florentines and Lucchese refused to break up their camps. The siege was most cruel. If a man left the town, his foot was cut off,—if a woman, her nose. At this juncture the Bianchi and Ghibellines were expelled from Bologna, and that city went over to the Neri Guelfs. Then Pistoia surrendered on the 10th of April, 1306. Her walls were pulled down, and her territory divided between Florence and Lucca; Pistoia itself was henceforth to be governed by a Podestà sent by the one city, and a Captain sent by the other; the refugees dispersed, and the

name of Bianchi, which had arisen in Pistoia, became now almost extinct, as the party became more and more confounded with the Ghibellines. The Pope having heard that his intervention was thus despised, made Cardinal Napoleon Orsini his Legate and peacemaker in Italy; he having come and offered his good offices, was not received in Florence, and was expelled from Bologna. He excommunicated both cities, deprived Bologna of its University, as we have before mentioned, and remained in Italy for the purpose of assembling an army of Bianchi-Ghibellines against Florence. So things had changed,—a Pope's Legate at the head of a Ghibelline force, armed against the ancient stronghold of the Guelf party*!

Dante took no part in all this, except that he was obliged to change his residence from Bologna to Padua, and that he removed to the neighbourhood of Florence, where these events were going on; and I do not think it is too bold a conjecture to conclude that these events drew him thither.

* Muratori, 1805, 1806. Villani, pp. 420-422.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAMILY OF MALASPINA.—THE DEATH OF CORSO
DONATI.—THE INFERNO BEGUN AND FINISHED.

OCTOBER 1306—1308.

O Muse, O lofty Genius, grant your aid!
O Memory—faithful record of the past—
Be here thy true nobility display'd.

Inferno, c. 2, v. 7-9.

THE Lunigiana was of old a sort of neutral ground, the usual residence in banishment of the Florentines of all parties. To it we have already seen Guido Cavalcanti and the other Bianchi banished during Dante's Priorate; and to it we shall soon see Uguccione della Faggiola banished; and that the Buonaparte family originated from Florentine exiles, who in old times established themselves there, has been stated since their great descendant attained his glory*. We now find Dante with Frances-

* Gerini, *Memorie storiche di Lunigiana*.

chino Malaspina of Mulazzo in the Lunigiana. Who knows but that Guido Cavalcanti may have met with such a reception from Malaspina, that this may have induced his friend to seek the same retreat. From Padua to the Lunigiana there was now no other road open (Ferrara and Bologna belonging to the Guefts) except through the Ghibelline cities of Mantua and Parma; so Dante must have passed through these*. Now Francesco de' Buonaccolsi was chief in Mantua, and his brother-in-law Giberto da Correggio, lord of Parma, and the latter brother-in-law to Franceschino Malaspina; so we may suppose that these three near connexions may have given Dante honourable recommendations to one another.

The family of Malaspina was more than any other honoured by Dante's gratitude. It boasts, as well as the House of Este and the Pelavicini, to derive its origin from the old Marquises of Tuscany, of the tenth and eleventh centuries. About the end of the twelfth century it divided into two branches; one of these was called *that of the flowery thorn*, the other *that of the dry thorn*†. We have only to do with the latter branch. The first member of this who was of importance was Corrado, surnamed *the old*, a great warrior, and lord of the Lunigiana in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

* Veltro, p. 81.

† *Dello spino fiorito and dello spino secco*. Gerini, tom. ii., 1st Genealogical Table.

His grandson, Corrado II., was also a valiant warrior and a liberal prince, who received as his guests Madonna Beritola and her sons the Capece, of whom Boccaccio* tells us such a pretty story. Corrado II. gave his only daughter, the lovely Spina, to the eldest son of these brothers, and died before 1300, without any male heirs†. But there remained numerous descendants of Corrado the old; among those of most importance to us are his grandson Franceschino, and his two great-grandsons the brothers Moroello and Corradino, sons of Obizzino, and, as they say in France, nephews *à la mode de Bretagne* of Franceschino‡. Now Dante was an ambassador and guest to all these three; and they, by showing him such liberal hospitality, have procured for their race a more widely-spread distinction than they ever received from their riches and power, or even from their political virtues or their deeds of prowess by sea and land.

One, or rather two authentic documents have come down to us of the negotiations in which Dante was engaged with these princes§. The first proceeds as follows:—"The magnificent Lord and Marquis Franceschino Malaspina makes Dante Algeri of Florence his procurator, to obtain and make a peace between the venerable Father, the Lord D. Antonio, Bishop of Luni, on the one side, and the Lord Franceschino in his own

* Boccaccio, Giorn. 2, Novella 6.

† Gerini, vol. ii. p. 29

‡ Gerini, Genealogical Table 2.

§ Pelli, p. 95. Gerini, vol. ii. pp. 31, 38, 43.

name, and in that of the brothers Moroello and Corradino, Marquises of Malaspina, on the other; and to promise that the said Lord Franceschino will procure the ratification of the said Lord Corradino for himself and for his brothers." The second act is as follows:—"At the third hour on the 6th of October, 1806, was peace concluded between the venerable Father the Lord D. Antonio Bishop, on the one side, and Franceschino Marquis Malaspina, and Corradino, son of the late Obizino Marquis Malaspina, and also Moroello Marquis Malaspina, whom the said Franceschino will endeavour to induce to ratify this act." From these two documents we find, first, that Franceschino was the first of the family of Malaspina who was Dante's host, and that it was he who made him acquainted with the other members of that family, who were not present at the first negotiations before the 6th of October: Secondly, that at the conclusion of peace on that day Corradino was present, but not his brother Moroello: Thirdly, that Dante must probably also have had an opportunity of forming an acquaintance, or rather intimacy and friendship, with Moroello, from all these negotiations, whose consent to this peace was to be obtained; and as we find it recorded that there existed a friendship between Dante and a Moroello Malaspina, it is most probable that this was the one.

We have an important memorial of this friendship, which has been recorded by Dante's first biographer and

commentator, and the one to whom we can give most credit,—I speak of Boccaccio. In his *Life of Dante* which he wrote in his youth*, and in his commentary on the *Commedia*, written in his old-age, he twice repeats the same particulars relating to the rough draught of this poem, or rather its first seven cantos. These, he says, were discovered in Florence, and sent to Dante five years after his exile (and thus in 1307), when he was the guest of the Marquis Moroello. There is thus no event of Dante's life better authenticated, nor one which more agrees with what we learn of him in other quarters, especially if this rough draught was the Latin copy which Dante, warm from his study and praise of the Italian language, was now prepared to render into, or rather to write over again, in that language. "It should be known that Dante had a sister who was married to one of our citizens, called Leon Poggi, by whom she had several children. Among these was one called Andrew, who wonderfully resembled Dante in the outline of his features, and in his height and figure; and he also walked rather stooping, as Dante is said to have done. He was a weak man, but with naturally good feelings, and his language and conduct were regular and praiseworthy. And I having become intimate with him, he often spoke to me of Dante's habits and ways; but among those things which I delight most in recollecting, is what he told me relating to that of which we are now speaking.

* Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 87.

He said then that Dante belonged to the party of Messer Vieri de' Cerchi, and was one of its great leaders; and when Messer Vieri and many of his followers left Florence, Dante left that city also and went to Verona. And on account of this departure, through the solicitation of the opposite party, Messer Vieri, and all who had left Florence, especially the principal persons, were considered as rebels, and had their persons condemned and their property confiscated. When the people heard this, they ran to the houses of those proscribed, and plundered all that was within them. It is true that Dante's wife, Madonna Gemma, fearing this, and by the advice of some of her friends and relations, had withdrawn from his house some chests containing certain precious things, and Dante's writings along with them, and had put them in a place of safety. And not satisfied with having plundered the houses of the proscribed, the most powerful partisans of the opposite faction occupied their possessions,—some taking one and some another,—and thus Dante's house was occupied.

“ But after five years or more had elapsed, and the city was more rationally governed, it is said, than it was when Dante was sentenced, persons began to question their rights on different grounds, to what had been the property of the exiles, and they were heard. Therefore Madonna Gemma was advised to demand back Dante's property, on the ground that it was her dowry. She, to prepare this business, required certain writings and documents

which were in one of the chests, which, in the violent plunder of the effects, she had sent away, nor had she ever since removed them from the place where she had deposited them. For this purpose, this Andrew said, she had sent for him, and as Dante's nephew had entrusted him with the keys of these chests, and had sent him with a lawyer to search for the required papers; while the lawyer searched for these, he, Andrew, among other of Dante's writings, found many sonnets, canzoni, and such similar pieces. But among them what pleased him the most was a sheet in which, in Dante's handwriting, the seven preceding cantos were written; and therefore he took it and carried it off with him, and read it over and over again; and although he understood but little of it, still it appeared to him a very fine thing; and therefore he determined, in order to know what it was, to carry it to an esteemed man of our city, who in those times was a much celebrated reciter of verses, whose name was Dino, the son of Messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi.

"It pleased Dino marvellously; and having made copies of it for several of his friends, and knowing that the composition was merely begun, and not completed, he thought that it would be best to send it to Dante, and at the same time to beg him to follow up his design, and to finish it; and having inquired, and ascertained that Dante was at this time in the Lunigiana, with a noble man of the family of Malaspina, called the Marquis

Moroello, who was a man of understanding, and who had a singular friendship for him, he thought of sending it, not to Dante himself, but to the Marquis, in order that he should show it to him: and so Dino did, begging him that, as far as it lay in his power, he would exert his good offices, to induce Dante to continue and finish his work.

"The seven aforesaid cantos having reached the Marquis's hands, and having marvellously pleased him, he showed them to Dante; and having heard from him that they were his composition, he entreated him to continue the work. To this it is said that Dante answered, 'I really supposed that these, along with many of my other writings and effects, were lost when my house was plundered, and therefore I had given up all thoughts of them. But since it has pleased God that they should not be lost, and He has thus restored them to me, I shall endeavour, as far as I am able, to proceed with them according to my first design.' And recalling his old thoughts, and resuming his interrupted work, he speaks thus in the beginning of the eighth canto: 'My wondrous history I here renew*.'

"Now precisely the same story, almost without any alteration, has been related to me by a Ser Dino Perino, one of our citizens and an intelligent man, who, according to his own account, had been on the most friendly and familiar terms with Dante; but he so far alters the story,

* *Inferno*, c. 8, v. 1.

that he says, 'It was not Andrea Leoni, but I myself, who was sent by the lady to the chests for the papers, and that found these seven cantos and took them to Dino, the son of Messer Lambertuccio.' I do not know to which of these I ought to give most credit, but whichever of them spoke the truth, still a doubt occurs to me in what they say, which I cannot in any manner solve to my satisfaction; and my doubt is this. The Poet introduces Ciaccio into the sixth canto, and makes him prophesy, that before three years had elapsed from the moment he was speaking, the party to which Dante belonged should fall, and so it happened. But we know the removal of the Bianchi from office, and their departure from Florence, all happened at once; and therefore if the author departed at that time, how could he have written this,—and not only this, but another canto after it?"

Now Poggi and Perini might have both gone together, or one after the other, to the chests, and thus might have both boasted of it. To Boccaccio's second, or rather only difficulty, I answer thus: that we must remember that the cantos thus discovered were in Latin, and that Dante did not afterwards translate them word for word, which would not at all suit his taste or genius; but that he turned them by a free paraphrase into Italian, and, while he did so, altered and added to them. And we shall find that not merely this single episode relating to Ciaccio, but the whole allegory of the first cantos of the

Poem, could not have been written in Florence before his exile.

Dante then owed to the family of Malaspina, and especially to Moroello, the encouragement he received to resume his great Poem, and the retreat in which he wrote the greatest part, and perhaps the whole, of the *Inferno*. And because no greater benefit can be conferred on an author than peace and tranquillity, so Dante displays more gratitude for this than for any other kindness he received. He not only praises the Malaspinas openly and liberally, and without the qualifications with which he neutralized the praises he elsewhere bestows, but he does not allow himself in any way to attach the slightest reproach to any person who might be more or less connected with that family. And we who owe to the Malaspinas the *Divina Commedia*, which Dante was thus again induced to resume, ought also to share in his gratitude. The second Corrado Malaspina is introduced in the *Purgatory*, among the least odious description of sinners, their fault being that of having deferred repentance from being engaged in the affairs of government. Corrado having been called forward by Dante's friend, the noble judge* Nino di Gallura, looks at the Poet for a long time, and addresses him thus:—

* Sardinia was at that time under the government of Pisa, divided into different districts, called *Judicatures*, and the governors of these *Judicatures* were called Judges. Nino was one of these judges.
(TRANSL.)

He then began: "Sufficient wax so may
 The lamp that guides thee find in thy free will,
 Far as the enamelled height* to speed thy way†,
 As any certain news thou may'st relate
 Of Valdimagra, or that country near,
 Where I, in days now pass'd away, was great.
 Conrado Malaspina was my name—
 Sprung from the elder one‡:—the love I bare
 To mine own race here burns with purer flame."
 "Oh, never have I seen thy land," I said,
 "But where throughout all Europe may be found
 The spot to which thy glory hath not spread?
 The fame that o'er your house such lustre throws
 Makes both its nobles and the land renown'd;
 E'en he who ne'er was there, their greatness knows.
 I swear by all my hopes to mount on high—
 The name your offspring won, both by the sword
 And generous deeds, they do not now belie.
 Habit and nature have such grace bestow'd,
 That though the world pursues a vicious Lord§,
 Upright alone they spurn the evil road."

* Commentators dispute the meaning of this *enamelled height*: some supposing it to mean the heaven of Paradise enamelled with stars, others the high mount of Purgatory enamelled with flowers. This is one of the few passages in which it is impossible to ascertain what Dante meant with any certainty, and where we must allow him to be obscure.

† These three lines may thus be explained: "May the Divine grace find so hearty a co-operation on the part of thy own will, as shall enable thee to ascend the terrestrial Paradise." (Cary.)

‡ Corrado Malaspina, Marquis of Lunigiana, the grandson of Corrado, surnamed the Old. He endeavours to elicit some tidings relative to the Valdimagra and the Lunigiana, of which he had been Marquis. (Wright.)

§ The vicious Lord is Pope Boniface VIII. See canto 16, v. 100-105. (Wright.)

"Wherefore proceed, for in that couch," he said,
 "Which Aries doth with his four feet impress,
 Seven times shall not the sun repose his head*,
 Ere the kind sentiment thou dost profess
 Shall in thy head be fix'd with firmer nail
 Than by the force of others' speech, unless
 The unerring course of heavenly Justice fail†."

Purgatorio, c. 8, v. 112-139.

Nothing can exceed this warm and affectionate praise, but perhaps Dante shows his attachment to this family most when he restrains his indignation against one of its members. The most celebrated Malaspina of that time was another Moroello, also a grandson of Corradino the Old, and thus cousin to Franceschino, and uncle *à la mode de Bretagne* of Dante's two friends Corradino and Moroello. He was an illustrious warrior, but belonged to the Guelf party; he had thus separated from the rest of his family, who, with few exceptions, had of old all been Ghibellines. This Moroello, after having been engaged in factions in the Lunigiana, and having been Captain at Milan, was chosen Captain of the Lucchese and the whole Neri league in 1301; at their head, he had in the summer of 1302 completely defeated the Bianchi of Florence in the Campi Piceni near Pistoia, which event shortly preceded and facilitated the revolu-

* From April, 1300, to April, 1307.

† "The Sun shall not enter the sign of the Ram seven times ere thou shalt be confirmed in thy good opinion of Valdimagra," referring to the hospitality experienced by Dante seven years after among the mountains of Luni, and in the house of Malaspina. See Ugo Foscolo. (Wright.)

tion effected by Corso Donati and Charles of Valois at Florence. Nor was this all; it was this same Moroello who in 1306 had led the Neri (of which Florence now entirely consisted) against their enemy Pistoia; he had taken possession of it by the assistance of the Lucchese, and he was left there as the first Podestà appointed by the allies. Thus, if any one could have drawn forth Dante's indignation, it ought to have been this Moroello; and especially in that part of his Poem in which he records the defeat of his party in the Campi Piceni. But notwithstanding all this, when the robber Vanni in the *Inferno*, furious at having been seen and recognised, fiercely foretells this event, he alludes to Moroello in moderate and almost laudatory language.

“ If ever from the pit released thou be,
 Lest aught of joy thou reap for this my shame,—
 Open thine ears, and hear what I declare:
 First shall the Neri from Pistoia* flee;
 Her race and laws shall Florence then forswear.
 From Valdimagra Mars collects around
 A vapour, wrapt with clouds o'ercharged and fell;
 Which thence, with tempest fierce and angry sound,
 Shall clash in fury on Piceno's plain;
 Whence suddenly the cloud it shall dispel,
 And each Bianco in the field be slain:
 This, to o'erwhelm thee with despair, I tell.†”

Inferno, c. 24, v. 140–151.

* The quarrel which led to the division of the Guelf party into the Neri and Bianchi, originated in Pistoia, and led to those important changes at Florence. (Wright.)

† The commentators explain this prophetic threat to allude to the

This Moroello, *the Vapour of the Valdimagra*, had been for some years the husband of Alagia de' Fieschi of Genoa. Her family had given two Popes to the Church, Innocent IV., the last illustrious Pontiff, and Adrian V., who reigned for a few months in 1266. Dante, who was so great an enemy to the Popes that he introduces none worthy of any notice into any part of his *Commedia*, has placed Adrian among the avaricious in Purgatory; after having conversed with him for a considerable time, and treated him with unusual moderation, he makes the Pope thus dismiss him:—

“Now go—I would not have thee tarry more;
 For thy delay my weeping doth prevent,
 Which ripens that whereof thou spak'st before*.
 Allied to me, on earth one dwelleth yet,
 My niece Alagia—pure and innocent,
 Unless our house a bad example set;
 And she alone my race doth represent†.”

Purgatorio, c. 19, v. 139–145.

The mention of this lady, which is perfectly unnecessary, but evidently done to pay her honour, would lead one to suppose that Dante had been on terms of friendship and familiarity with this Marchioness Malaspina, and perhaps

victory obtained by the Marquis Moroello Malaspina of Valdimagra, who put himself at the head of the Neri, and defeated their opponents the Bianchi in the Campo Pisano near Pistoia. (Cary.)

* His purification. (TRANSL.)

† Alagia, daughter of the Count of Fieschi, and who does not appear to be praised, unless to heap greater disgrace on her family, was the wife of Moroello Malaspina. (Ugo Foscolo.)

even with her husband *the Vapour of the Valdimagra*; there is nothing improbable in this, for the natural generosity of this family was superior to party spirit, and Dante appears to have been full of gratitude to the whole race. But this Moroello, the son of Manfredi, must never be confounded with the other Moroello, the son of Obizzino. It was for this last that Dante concluded the peace with the Bishop of Luni in 1306; and this Moroello, the son of Obizzino, was also Dante's host in the year 1307, while he was writing the *Inferno*. At that time Moroello, the son of Manfredi, was Podestà of Pistoia. With respect to the dedication of the *Purgatorio*, which was addressed to a Moroello Malaspina, it may be doubted to which of the two this was. The greater celebrity of the Vapour of the Valdimagra might incline one to suppose it was to him; but I maintain it to be the younger Moroello, because I think Dante would have been more likely to have written a dedication from friendship and gratitude, than merely as a tribute to eminence.*

Before following Dante's fortunes, let us turn to the affairs of Italy and Florence. In 1307 broke out the war which had been brewing the previous year,—a strange war, for in it the Cardinal Legate Napoleon Orsini was at the head of the Ghibellines and Bianchi; he, followed by Scarpetta degli Ordellaffi, Captain of the Ghibellines of Romagna, and Federigo Feltrio, made war against Florence, which was still the chief city of the Neri

* Gerini, vol. ii. pp. 39-51.

Guelfs, and was assisted by Bologna, Lucca, and Sienna. The Papal Ghibelline troops assembled at Arezzo, and marched from thence against the Florentines as far as Bibiena, where, having remained facing one another for some time, each army withdrew about the close of the year, first the Florentines and then the Papal troops. They did not succeed better in negotiations than in arms, and the Cardinal returned without any result to the Pope's court, which was not then at Rome, but at the ultramontane Babylon. The Pope was dissatisfied with his Legate, and the Italians were dissatisfied with the Pope; the Guelfs considering him their natural ally, and therefore now a traitor to their cause, and the Ghibellines regarding him as a new and lukewarm friend*. The affairs of Italy towards the end of the year 1307 and the beginning of 1308 have been so well described, as far as they relate to Dante's life, by the author of the *Veltro*, that I will give the account in his words, and I know my readers will be grateful to me for presenting them with a picture which I could not rival. "The Cardinal Orsini having departed, the war ceased in Tuscany, but continued for some time in Romagna, from whence it passed into the surrounding countries of Ferrara, Parma, and Liguria. Guido da Polenta III., now very old, and the decrepid Malatesta di Verucchio, had both retired from the toils of government; the former had been succeeded by his sons Bernardino and Ostasio, the latter by

* Murat. Ann. 1306, 1307. Villani, pp. 420, 426. *Veltro*, pp. 87, 89.

the cruel Malatestino del Occhio. These new lords were jealous of one another, but agreed in bitterly hating the Ordelaffi. The death of Azzo VIII. of Este, whom Dante censures and scorns for his many vices, gave occasion to such fierce dissensions among his heirs, that some of them placed Ferrara under the protection of Clement V. and the Roman Church. Giberto di Correggio, vanquished by the Guelfs, to whom he had been faithless, was forced with the Ghibellines to leave Parma. His safest retreat was Mantua, thanks to the Buonaccolsi. Alboin with much pomp associated with himself in the government of Verona his brother Can the Great, who had now reached his seventeenth year; their other brother, Giuseppe, was at the head of the Abbey of San Zeno, and entirely devoted to pleasure, and to the enriching of his two natural sons Bartolammio and Alberto. Branca Doria and Opicino Spinola governed Genoa; and the exiled Fieschi, the relations of Alagia Malaspina, made frequent incursions against them. At this time the Emperor Albert of Austria died, assassinated by his nephew, which event gave fresh audacity to the factions of Italy. Franceschino Malaspina directly hastened to the assistance of his brother-in-law Correggio, and replaced him in Parma. His allies the Fieschi were less fortunate in their assault upon Genoa, and were fiercely repulsed by Spinola and Branca Doria. Romagna in the meanwhile took better counsel, and returned to the peace which had been interrupted by the

expedition of Cardinal Orsini. Bologna, Imola, Faenza, Forli, Cesena, Rimini, and Bertinoro, joined together in friendly treaties, and remained spectators of the war which was raging among the family of Este, on account of Ferrara; and Scarpetta degli Ordelaffi retired from the office of Captain*.

A month had scarcely elapsed after these events, when a still more important event happened in Florence, ever restless, and now divided between Corso Donati and the Nobles on one side, and Rosso della Tosa and the *Popolani* (burghers) on the other.

"Messer Corso and his followers," says Villani, "considered themselves ill-used as regarded honours and public offices, for they considered they deserved them most, because they had taken the chief part in restoring the Neri, and in expelling the Bianchi. But the other party said that Messer Corso wished to make himself lord of the city, and did not wish for any associate in the government. Whatever may have been the true cause, the other party, who ruled the people, hated and suspected him ever since he had allied himself by marriage to the Ghibelline Uguccione della Faggiola, the enemy of the Florentine Comune; they also feared him, knowing his bold spirit, his numerous followers, and his great power, and they dreaded that he should deprive them of the government and expel them from the town; and this especially, as they found out that the said Messer Corso

* Veltro, pp. 91, 92.

had made a league and covenant with the said Uguccone, who had been sent for by him and his followers. This affair immediately excited great jealousy in the city, and they rose in uproar, and the Priors caused the *Campana** to be sounded, and all the city rose in arms, both foot and horse, and also the companies of Catalans with the King's† marshal, who were placed under the command of those who governed the town. And immediately, as it was arranged by the aforesaid heads of faction, an inquisition into the conduct of, or rather an accusation against, the said Messer Corso, was presented to the Podestà, who was then Messer Piero della Branca of Agobbio, accusing him of wishing to betray the people and to overthrow the government of the city, by bringing in Uguccone and the Ghibellines, the enemies of the Comune of Florence; . . . and he was condemned in less than an hour, without any more time being given to the proceedings; and he was condemned as a rebel and as a traitor to his Comune; and immediately issued from the Palace the Priors, the Gonfaloniere of Justice, with the Podestà, the Captain of the People, and the Executor, with their officers, and the civic companies with their banners, with the armed populace, and troops on horseback, the people crying out; and they marched towards the house which Messer Corso inhabited, near

* The Campana was a great bell which was sounded when a general assembly of armed citizens was desired in Florence. (TRANSL.)

† *The King* means the King of Naples.

San Piero Maggiore. Messer Corso, hearing of the prosecution, had barricaded himself in the suburb of San Piero Maggiore, at the foot of the Tower of Cicino, and at the entrance of the street of Torricoda, which leads to the Stinche* and to the street of San Brocolo; he threw up strong barricades, and placed within them many people, his friends and relations, and crossbow-men in his service. It was said that he did this to fortify himself, while he waited for Ugucione and his men, who were already arrived at Remolo. The people began to attack these barricades on all sides, and Messer Corso and his friends to defend them bravely; the battle lasted the greater part of the day, and it was so stiff that, though the people exerted all their strength, had Ugucione and the other friends whom Corso had invited from the country arrived in due time, the Florentine people would have had much to do that day. For though the Comune and people were strong, they were in bad discipline, and not agreed amongst themselves, for there was a part of them which all this did not please. But Ugucione's men, hearing how Messer Corso had been attacked by the populace, turned back, and the citizens who defended the barricades began to depart, so that Messer Corso remained with very few men. At this juncture certain of the populace broke through the wall of the garden opposite the Stinche prison, and entered by it with a great many armed men; and Messer Corso and his followers, seeing

* Stinche, a prison in Florence.

that the succour from Uguccione had failed them, abandoned their houses, and fled out of the town, which houses were immediately plundered and pulled down by the populace; and Messer Corso and his followers were pursued by a few citizens on horseback and Catalans, who were sent to try to catch them; and Gherardo Bordoni, who had belonged to, and was still one of, Messer Corso's party, was overtaken by Boccaccio Cavicciuli, and murdered in a little rivulet which flows through the plain of San Salvi and is called the Affrico; and after he was dead, Cavicciuli cut off his hand and carried it to the Corso of the Adimari, and nailed it to the door of Messer Tedice degli Adimari, on account of his enmity towards that family. And Messer Corso proceeding all alone, was overtaken and seized near a villa called Ravezzano by certain Catalan horsemen; and as they were leading him as a prisoner to Florence, he promising them on the way much money if they would allow him to escape, and the said Catalans still resolving to lead him along with them, as they had been ordered to do by the Florentine magistrates, Messer Corso, as they came near San Salvi, fearing to fall into the hands of his enemies and to be executed by the populace, being much cramped with gout in his hands and feet, let himself fall from his horse. The said Catalans seeing him on the ground, one stabbed him in his throat with a mortal thrust; and leaving him for dead, the monks of the said monastery bore him to the said Abbey of San Salvi . . . and the

next morning he was buried with little honour in the said abbey, and few people were present for fear of the Comune. This Messer Corso was the wisest and most worthy knight of his time,—the best speaker, the most experienced statesman, the most renowned, boldest, and most enterprising nobleman in Italy. He was handsome in person, and of the most gracious manners, but very worldly, and caused infinite disturbance in Florence on account of his ambition; therefore we have given this long account of his end, because it was a great event in the city, and many things followed after it, that these may be understood by the wise, and that he may be an example to those who have to follow*.”

The 15th of September was the day of Corso Donati's miserable death. His friend Uguccione reaped the fruit of it with the Ghibellines, who a few days afterwards made him Podestà of Arezzo for the eighth time.

I think there is no doubt that it was these various events which gave such new hopes to the Ghibelline party, that drew Dante about the close of 1306 into the Lunigiana. It is no less probable that he remained there, or in its neighbourhood, during the two following years; but it appears to me not only doubtful, but almost incredible, that he should have taken any active part in these events; he, who for some years had made *a party by himself*, and having tasted the sweets of study, had resumed his

* Villani, pp. 432, 434; compare this with Dino Compagni, pp. 141, etc., and Veltro, pp. 93–95.

great work. During these years he wrote and completed the *Inferno*, and it seems impossible, if anything could be impossible to Dante's active genius, that he could at the same time have been actively engaged in public life. The author of the *Veltro* (from whom I never differ without timidity)*, makes out that Dante was secretary to Scarpetta degli Ordelaffi, from 1307 until August 1308, when Scarpetta ceased to hold the office of Captain. He rests his authority on the historians of Forlì, who quote from some old writings which are now destroyed; and this he considers confirmed by allusions to Romagna, which are very numerous in the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth cantos of the *Inferno*. If these allusions to Romagna, which may be attributed to Dante's first residence in these countries, would appear an insufficient argument, and if it is impossible to ascertain the truth of those documents of which these historians of Forlì speak, still it is equally difficult entirely to reject them. It is at least possible that Dante may have written the *Inferno* in these two years, in the intervals between journeys and negotiations, whether he was or was not secretary, or as it was then called *Notary*, to Ordelaffi. Boccaccio† records a second journey to Verona, which the author of the *Veltro* does not hesitate to fix during the last months of 1308, before his return to the Lunigiana‡. But as I see no reason for

* *Veltro*, pp. 89-92.

† Boccaccio, Ediz. Flor., p. 20.

‡ *Veltro*, pp. 93, 97.

so distant a journey that year, we may rather suppose it to have taken place the preceding year from Padua, which is not far from Verona.

At any rate, about the end of 1308, or the beginning of 1309, he either brought the finished *Inferno* to the Lunigiana, or had completed it there, as has been inferred from there being no allusion in it to any event that happened later than that year*. And the first part of his great work being completed, Dante not only prepared to quit the Lunigiana, but to go far from Florence, (to which city he now despaired of returning,) and to leave Italy, through which he had wandered so long, that he was, or he supposed himself to be, degraded in the eyes of the Italians. The condition of the Ghibelline party was little less than desperate, from the unfortunate result of Corso Donati's and Uguccione's last conspiracy, of which Dante, the friend of the latter and related by marriage to the former, was probably cognisant. Corso Donati's death, and Uguccione's retirement to Arezzo as Podestà, were probably the circumstances which extinguished the exile's hopes, and drove him forth to a new and more grievous banishment beyond the Alps†. Added to this,

* We owe to C. Marchetti, who has been followed by the author of the *Veltro*, this very important piece of criticism, which thus dates the latest period at which the *Inferno* could have been written.

† Ferretto Vicentino, (*Rer. It. ix. p. 979*) in attributing Dante's exile to the death of Corso, commits an error which has some shadow of truth in it. It was not his first involuntary exile from Florence, but the second voluntary exile from Italy, that was probably owing to the death of Corso.

if we consider that in order to undertake the *Purgatorio*, in which the theological part of his poem begins, Dante must have felt the necessity of further study of that science, and that the first school of theology in Europe was then at Paris, his journey may be more easily accounted for than most events relating to him, confirmed as it is by Boccaccio's testimony, by the reminiscences of it found in the *Purgatorio*, and by Dante's after life.

"There," continues the author of the *Veltro*, "where that majestic river the Magra terminates its course, to the right of its mouth stretches into the sea Monte Caprione, the ancient possession of the Bishops of Luni and the Malaspinas. The extreme point of Monte Caprione is called the *Corvo* (crow); here begins the Gulf of Spezia, once the port of Luni, on the delightful Ligurian shores. On the heights with which this Gulf is crowned appear the castles of the Spinolas, the Dorias, the Fieschis, and the Malaspinas. On one side of the *Corvo* appears the lovely little port of Lerici; on the other of its sides rises a little mount on the Magra: on this mount, in 1176, Pepin, Bishop of Luni, founded the monastery of Santa Croce del *Corvo*. In the beginning of the fourteenth century it was inhabited by the hermits of St. Augustine, and Fra Ilario was its Prior. Now nothing remains of the church but its choir; the shipwrecked hang on it their votive offerings*."

To this Fra Ilario, who was probably a friend of

* *Veltro*, pp. 97, 98.

Uguccione's, Dante now came, and what follows is related by this monk in a Latin letter to Uguccione.

"To the excellent and magnificent Messer Uguccione della Faggiola, most eminent among the Italian Nobles, Fra Ilario, a humble Monk of the Corvo at the mouth of the Magra, health, through Him in whom we all are saved. As our Saviour preaches, the good man produces good from the good treasure of his heart; and in this two instructions are comprehended,—that by external actions we can learn what is within the hearts of others, and that by our words we show to others what is within our own hearts. Therefore it is written, 'By their fruits ye shall know them;' and though this may be said of sinners, we may understand it still more generally of the just, the latter being always disposed to show themselves, and the former to conceal themselves. Nor is it only the desire of glory that moves us to bring forth the fruit of what we have good within us, but even God's commandment, which prohibits our leaving idle the graces that He has granted to us; because God and nature condemn idleness, and sentence that tree to the fire which denies fruit in its season. Now that which is here said of the production of one's inward treasure, seems to have never been so well observed by any Italian as by this man, even from his childhood, whose work, with the expositions made by me, I mean here to send you. For (according to what I hear from others, and it is wonderful) those things which can scarcely be expounded in Latin by the best scholars,

he has endeavoured to make clear in the vulgar tongue, —in the vulgar tongue I repeat, not simply, but harmoniously. And to leave his praises to his works, where they will doubtless appear most plainly to the learned, I come shortly to the subject.

“ Know then that this man, intending to go beyond the Alps, and passing through the diocese of Luni*, whether out of devotion to the place, or for some other cause, came to the said monastery. I having seen him, and he being unknown to me and my brethren, I questioned him, and asked him what he wanted? And he not answering a word, but only gazing on the building, again I questioned him, and asked him what he wanted or sought for? He then, looking round at me and the brethren, said, ‘ Peace†.’ This made me still more eager to know what was the condition of this man; and drawing him apart from the others, and having had some conversation with him, I knew him. For though I had never seen him until that day, his fame had long before reached me‡.

“ When afterwards he perceived that I was entirely attentive to him, and saw that I was absorbed in his

* From these words the author of the *Veltro* argues that Dante only stayed a few days in the Lunigiana, and therefore must have come from some other parts.

† How well this agrees with Dante’s manners and his taciturnity!

‡ Dante, not unknown from the official situations he had held, and his early poetry, must have been for the last two years well known in the Lunigiana.

words, he drew a book from his bosom in a friendly manner, and showed it to me frankly. 'Behold,' said he to me, 'a part of my work, which perhaps* thou hast never seen. I leave you such a monument, in order that you may keep me better in your memory.' And having handed to me a book, and I receiving it with gratitude on my lap, I opened it, and in his presence I fixed my eyes on it with affection. And having seen that the words were in the vulgar tongue, and showing some degree of wonder†, he asked me the cause of my pausing; to which I answered, that I marvelled at the language being as it was; both because it appeared to me difficult, or rather inconceivable, that he should be able to express in the vulgar tongue so deep a subject; and because it did not appear to me fitting to clothe so much learning in a popular dress.

" 'Certainly thou thinkest according to reason,' he answered, 'and when originally (moved perhaps by Heaven)‡ the seed of this undertaking germinated within me, I selected for it its legitimate language; and not only I selected it, but according to the usual custom I began to write poetry in it.

* The word *perhaps* would make one suppose, that some copies may have been already made of some of the cantos of the Inferno. (Veltro.)

† His wonder shows that the first cantos that were known were first written in Latin.

‡ The author of the Veltro attributes this parenthesis to the Friar, but it appears to me included in Dante's words; for as early as the Vita Nuova he had expressed this same thought.

*“ Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo,
Spiritus quæ lata patent, quæ præmia solvunt
Pro meritis cuicumque suis.”*

“ ‘ But when I considered the condition of the present age, I saw that the songs of the most illustrious poets were despised by all, and for that very reason generous men, who in better times wrote on such things, now, alas ! left the liberal arts to plebeians. For which reason I laid aside the poor lyre with which I had been provided, and I made another adapted to the senses of the moderns, it being vain to offer strong meat to sucking babes.’

“ Having said these things with great feeling, he added that, if I were permitted to apply myself to such things, I might supply this work with certain notes, and along with these I might transmit it to you. If I have not entirely unravelled the hidden meaning of his words, I have however endeavoured to do so faithfully, and with a liberal spirit, and I intend to send the demanded* work to that destination enjoined by that most friendly man. In which work, if aught should appear ambiguous, impute it solely to my insufficiency, the text undoubtedly being in every way perfect.

“ If your Mightiness should one day seek for the two other parts of this work (as desiring to make a whole from a union of parts), you will find the second part, which follows this, in the possession of that excellent

* This word demanded would make one suppose that Ugucione had already asked the friar for this work.

man the Marquis Moroello, and the last might be found with the most illustrious Frederick, King of Sicily*. Because this is what the author asserted to me he had intended in his plan, that, after having considered all Italy, he selected you three above all others to whom he would offer his tripartite labour†.

There is little to say regarding the facts of this letter, which agree perfectly with all we know of Dante, and of his habits. Its authenticity has been questioned, it is true, by a man well versed in literature; but he has been answered by one not his inferior, and to inquire into this question would occupy a volume. My own opinion is that there is little doubt of its genuineness. I find only one difficulty in what is related there, and it is the dedication of the *Paradiso* to Frederick, King of Sicily; not only because it was not in fact dedicated to him, but to Can Grande della Scala, (a change which might be explained in many ways,) but because this same Frederick is reviled in the *Convito* and in the *Volgare Eloquentia*, written shortly before this period, and again in the *Purgatorio*, and in the *Paradiso* written after it; thence it is not probable that Dante should pay so much honour to one whom he before and afterwards so much despised‡. But suppose we give up the letter, still we do not get rid

* The terms in which Frederick is here spoken of would make one suppose it were doubtful whether the *Paradiso* was dedicated to him.

† Veltro, pp. 208-214.

‡ *Volgare Eloquentia*, book i. c. 12. *Purgatorio*, c. 7, v. 119. *Paradiso*, c. 19, v. 130; c. 20, v. 63.

of the difficulty ; for Boccaccio, in his *Life*, says that some have maintained that the Purgatorio was finally dedicated to Frederick. It is possible that Dante for a time might have entertained some hopes of Frederick ; but being disappointed in them, he added fresh censures to those with which he had formerly stigmatised him. And what adds weight to this conjecture, is the doubtful manner in which this dedication is spoken of by Fra Ilario, and Frederick's own exploits, which were so full of promise but so barren in results.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMMEDIA.—ITS ALLEGORIES.—THE INTRO-
DUCTION.

1306-1308.

Within its depth I saw that by the chains
Of love, in one sole volume was combined
Whate'er the universal world contains.

Paradiso, c. 33, v. 85-87.

WHEN in the other parts of the present work we have described Dante as a citizen, a youthful lover, and a friend,—as a writer of love-verses, a student of philosophy, a man entering into the political factions of his times, and as an exile, it was merely necessary to compare him with his fellow-citizens, and for this purpose we did not require to leave Italy. But now we have to speak of him as the author of the *Divina Commedia*, and as his country fails to give him equals, we must seek for them in other nations and other ages. Nor even in this wide search shall we find more than two poets, one before and one

after Dante,—Homer and Shakespeare,—who are in any way comparable to him, in the variety and perfection with which they paint human nature; they have not imitated other writers, but have drawn copies from life itself, and clothed them in those divine thoughts which perhaps alone ought to rank as sublime and creative poetry. But when we compare with one another the loftiness and universality of the pictures which have been left us by these three geniuses, Dante's description of the whole course of the human destiny throughout this and another life will appear to us unequalled and unrivalled. This is not my opinion alone, but it is that of far better judges; and in my admiration of him I at least follow the taste of our age and country; for since Dante sent the *Inferno* to Uguccione until the present day, there never has been a time in which the *Commedia* has been more universally read or studied than it is at present; and we now only can say that he has become as popular in Italy as Homer was among the Greeks, or as Shakespeare is among the Teutonic nations.

These three great writers all possess a mixture of great defects and many excellences. All three born in times scarcely rising from barbarism, they all three carry along with them the stamp of the virtues, the freedom of genius, the originality of style, the passions, the vigour, and the simplicity of a youthful age; but with these they have also its defects, wanting that taste and refinement which belong both in literature and manners to a

succeeding period. These faults offend us less in Homer, whether it be owing to our respect for his antiquity, or to that acquired in the course of our studies; but they offended Horace, the man of greatest taste in the most refined age of antiquity. Homer was the great poet of the infancy of letters,—Dante and Shakspeare the most distinguished at the two periods of its revival. Homer is the greatest in the Heathen world,—Dante and Shakspeare the two greatest in the Christian. Supernatural sublimity could not belong to an age so far removed from heavenly knowledge, as to imagine the Divinity envious and sensual: Homer's gods are merely men, his heaven is still earth. And between the two Christian poets, the son of the first revival of letters, the Italian, the Catholic, must have the advantage over Shakspeare, who belonged to a revival which was derived from ours, and was far removed from the primitive and more poetic fountain.

The *Commedia* was first conceived in an impulse of passionate love; it was developed in a dream, and confirmed by a vow of love; it was abandoned, and after eight years resumed; for thirty years it occupied Dante's mind and constant heart, and the vow being fulfilled, the labours and life of the unhappy Poet ended together. There is no work of imagination which is so true or so great a proof of love as this divine poem. Thus amid the corruptions, additions, and contractions from which it has suffered, nothing excites one's indignation so much,

nor ought more resolutely to be rejected by all who wish to understand the *Commedia* and to enter into all its beauties, than the supposition that Beatrice is sometimes to be understood as Theology, sometimes as Philosophy, and sometimes as Italy. That she was intended to represent either of the last two of these three allegorical personages is absolutely false, and that she represented the first is only an approach to the truth; for Beatrice, who ranges throughout the whole of heaven, and of whom Dante speaks throughout his whole poem, cannot be meant by him for Theology, to which he gives a determinate place in the fifth heaven, and of which he treats expressly in the tenth and four succeeding cantos of the *Paradiso*. If we desire to read Dante's works as he intended that they should be read, we must understand their literal sense before their allegorical; and thus every time that we meet with Beatrice, we must understand the real Beatrice, Portinari's graceful daughter, Dante's lost mistress. But it is also true that, if we seek for it, we shall find an allegorical as well as a literal sense.

In the *Convito* we plainly find not only the use, but the abuse, of allegory. We see the compassionate lady of the *Vita Nuova* turned into philosophy, the heavens into sciences, etc. But Dante himself protests, that "he did not intend in the *Convito** in any manner to derogate from the *Vita Nuova*;" besides, before entering into the explanation of his canzoni, he lays down

* *Convito*, p. 6.

rules on allegorical criticism, and they may and ought to serve as an explanation to the *Commedia*. "It should be known that writings ought to be above all understood and expounded in four senses: one is called the literal sense*; . . . and this is that which is concealed under the cloak of fables, and is truth concealed beneath a beautiful falsehood; so when Ovid says that Orpheus with his gentle lyre made the wild beasts, and trees, and plants move of themselves, he means that the wise man with his voice softens and bends cruel hearts, and makes those who are not animated by science move according to his will, and those who are not animated by rational knowledge are scarcely above stones. And why this concealment was invented by the wise, will be explained in the last Treatise but one†. It is true the theologians make use of this sense in a different manner from the poets; but since my intention is here to follow the ways of the poets, I will take the allegorical sense, according as the poets have made use of it. The third sense is called moral; and this is that which readers ought to look out diligently for in books, both for their own sakes and for that of their disciples; for in the Gospel, when Christ ascended the mount to his Transfiguration, we see that of the twelve Apostles he only took with him

* Here there is something lost, which the editor of the *Minerva* edition thus supplies:—*And this is that, in which the words do not depart from the strict apparent meaning. The second is called allegorical, etc.*

† It was not afterwards explained, as all the Treatises the author had designed were not written. . .

three; and from this in a moral sense we may understand that in our secret actions we ought to have few companions. The fourth sense is called anagogical, that is, beyond the senses . . . and in demonstrating this the literal sense ought always to come first, as within it the others are included, and without it it would be impossible and irrational to attempt to understand the others, and most especially the allegorical sense*."

He continues to speak of the irrationality of explaining any of these meanings without the literal one, and all this proves satisfactorily that those who place the allegorical above the literal meaning in any of Dante's works, proceed quite contrary to his intentions. In his dedication of the *Paradiso* to Can Grande, in speaking of the whole *Commedia*, he says, "that the meaning of it is not singlefold, but it may be said to contain many meanings . . . it will be seen by the subject of the work how much of it is to be taken in a literal sense, and how much of it allegorically. The subject of the whole work then, taking it only literally, is simply the condition of the souls after death; therefore on and about their condition the whole work revolves. But if we consider the work in its allegorical sense, the subject is how much Man, by his own free will, owing to his merits and demerits, is subjected by justice to rewards and punishments†." Let readers have patience, if, like me, they

* *Convito*, pp. 56, 58.

† *Epist. Kan Grand. Ed. Ven. tom. iv. Part I, p. 402. Witte, p. 67.*

can understand little or nothing of this general allegory of the whole *Commedia*. It is quite clear that it was added by the author after he had completed his work, and that it may be, or rather ought to be, rejected by his readers.

But there are other particular allegories in the poem, without which parts of it would be less beautiful, and even unintelligible. And first, though it ought to be always remembered that Beatrice is really the woman whom Dante loved, still there is also an allegory understood in her name. But this is merely the idealization of a beloved mistress, and this was done not only by Dante, but by Petrarch, and afterwards by many of their followers, and by all those poets who were on that account called Platonists, as well as many who were not poets, but merely lovers. These considered a virtuous and beloved mistress as a means of rising from vice to virtue, from earth to heaven, from a devotion to material and base things to a comprehension of what was spiritual and divine, and even of God himself. This knowledge and adoration of God and blessedness in Him, is what we find figured under the name of Beatrice. The allegory thus understood does not destroy nor conceal the real image of Beatrice, but rather elevates and glorifies her in the manner which many other poets and lovers have attempted, but have never succeeded in doing as Dante has done; and this does not diminish, but increases, the beauty of the poem.

As Beatrice is both the Beatrice herself and the personification of the knowledge of and *blessedness* in God*, so the Virgil of this poem is both the real Virgil and the representative of Poetry; the Sun also represents theological knowledge; and thus we might go on. The whole poem, from beginning to end, is full of these allegories, most of them beautiful, but some indifferent, and some we must acknowledge perfectly useless, involved, and obscure. But the most beautiful of them all is that in the Introduction, which has been so often misunderstood; if it is understood according to the intention of the author, it is a most necessary and proper introduction for a work of which the writer makes himself the hero. It is a sort of retrospective history of his whole intellectual life.

Dante says that in the middle of his life, that is, at the age of thirty-five, to which he had just attained in April, 1300, the year of the Jubilee, he found himself by a *dark, woody, savage, and thick forest* †; by this, according to the allegorical sense, he means the forest of human vices. But in another passage, by a *mournful wood* ‡ he also

* Even the name of Beatrice (*she who blesses*) would assist Dante in thus transforming and exalting his mistress.

† “Una selva obscura.” *Inferno*, c. 1, v. 2.

“Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte.”

(This wild and rough and stubborn wood.)—*Ibid.* c. 1, v. 5.

‡ “Sanguinoso esce della trista selva:”

(Blood-stain'd he issues from the mournful wood.)

Purgatorio, c. 14, v. 64.

means Florence, calling himself one of its *plants*; he likewise calls the kingdom of France *a wood*. Thus we see that by the general word *wood* (*selva*), he understands this world here below, its kingdoms, and cities; and by the *woody forest* (*selva selvaggia*), he understands Florence, because in 1300 it was in the hands of the Bianchi, or the party of *the woods* (*parte selvaggia*)*. The wood then is a wood of vices, but of Florentine vices. He goes on to say, that he cannot explain how he entered into it, he was in such a deep sleep (*pien di sonno*†) when he entered it, having abandoned the true path, that is, his fidelity to Beatrice, or the virtuous life he had led by his love to her as long as she lived; and he adds that the remembrance of that time was *so bitter to him that death is little more so*‡. Through this wood, lying in the depth of a valley, he arrives at the foot of a hill, and sees its summit shining by the light of the rising sun, that is to say, science or philosophy, human and divine, to which he had aspired until the death of Beatrice. But as he had abandoned these studies and aspirations from 1293 to 1300, owing to the wild and luxurious life he had been leading, and from his having also been absorbed in the public affairs and factions of Florence, he goes on to say that he was impeded in his ascent to this bright mountain by three wild beasts, a lynx, a lion, and a panther. There is no doubt that these signify, in a moral sense, according to the ancient interpretation, luxury,

* *Inferno*, c. 6, v. 65.

† *Ibid.* c. 1, v. 11.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 1, v. 7.

pride or ambition, and avarice. But this luxury must be understood as Florentine luxury, so dangerous to Dante during these years; the pride was especially the pride of the French princes, particularly of Charles of Valois, who even in 1300 threatened Florence; and the avarice is that of the Guelfs, who throughout the whole poem are called wolves. Every syllable relating to these three wild beasts is not only comprehensible but beautiful. All three oppose Dante's ascent to the shining mountain: but the wolf, the Guelf party, is that which gives him the greatest and the latest annoyance. Then Virgil appears before him, who represents poetry, as well as the idea itself of the poem; he instructs Dante that by this direct way he will never succeed in ascending the mountain, which he will be prevented doing by the wolf. He foretells the wickedness and the various fortunes of this beast, that is of the Guelf party, until it shall be vanquished by a greyhound, that is a Ghibelline, of southern Italy, which is certainly intended for Uguccone, to whom the *Inferno* is dedicated. "So then," Virgil continues, "it will be necessary to take another way. Let your thoughts return to your poem; descend with it into Hell and Purgatory; it will raise you afterwards to Heaven, with a soul more worthy of that place." And to this the courageous Dante consents, giving himself up entirely to Virgil and his poem.

But the first day having already passed, and night

coming on, Dante becomes discouraged, and his doubts and the interruptions to the continuation of the poem are here pointed out. He turns himself to his guide, Virgil, and represents to him that Æneas, the father of Rome, which was the pre-destined seat of the Popes, might descend into Hell, and Paul, *the Vessel of Election*, might ascend into Heaven; but that he, Dante, cannot be compared to either of these, and he fears his boldness might be madness. Then Virgil encourages him, and reveals to him in what manner he had been sent to his assistance. He relates in divine poetry how he had been called from Limbo by Beatrice, *the Praise of the true God*, the blessedness in God, the knowledge of God; that she had been moved by Lucia, or Faith, who had been sent by a still higher lady, who could be no other than the Virgin Mary,—Mary, to whom Beatrice, and afterwards Dante, were so warmly devoted. So then, what reason was there for being disheartened? Why still pause, when protected by three such beings of Paradise? And Dante, thus encouraged, again proceeds on his way along with his guide.

This then is the Introduction to the *Commedia*; and now that it has been explained by the late studies of various critics and biographers, it will always appear a worthy beginning of one of the most beautiful parts of the poem. It is however much to be wondered at, that these explanations have not yet been collected by any

commentator. But whoever wishes fully to enter into the history of Dante's life, must read these two cantos attentively, as a fragment that he has given us himself of his own biography.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INFERNO.

1306-1308.

Through me ye enter the abode of woe :
Through me to endless sorrow are convey'd :
Through me amid the souls accurst ye go.
Justice did first my lofty Maker move :
By Power Almighty was my fabric made,
By highest Wisdom, and by primal Love.
Ere I was form'd no things created were,
Save those eternal,—I eternal last :
All hope abandon—ye who enter here.

Inferno, c. 3, v. 1-10.

THESE words of dark import Dante reads inscribed on the Gates of Hell, and then enters through it along with Virgil. But we shall not continue to give an epitome of the poem, for this has been given us, as beautifully as it could be done, by Ginguené. It is impossible however to give a satisfactory epitome of a work like this. Alfieri tells us that, wishing to make

extracts of the beauties of the *Commedia*, he by degrees copied it all. I shall here merely notice the plan of the *Inferno*, and its different personages; but whoever understands and remembers it well, may pass over this chapter as useless.

Hell is placed underground, but open to the skies*, almost like a well in the shape of a funnel, or an amphitheatre, with nine wide steps or concentric plains, descending from one another by narrow passages, to the centre of our globe, which is occupied by Beelzebub. We shall see afterwards nine ascending steps in Purgatory, and nine heavens in Paradise. At each of these, nine circles of Hell a chief demon presides, whose name and form are taken from heathen mythology. Thus in the first circle we find Charon, who carries the souls in his boat over the river Acheron†. This river divides the first circle, or Limbo, into two parts,—the one most ignominious, the other almost glorious‡. The first is occupied

* Most, or rather all, of the descriptions of the form and situation of the *Inferno* represent it as vaulted, or covered over with a crust of earth. But the two Poets seeing the stars seems to me to contradict this notion; see canto 7, v. 98; c. 11, v. 113–115; c. 20, v. 124; c. 29, v. 10; although as they descended lower the vapour and the smoke darkened the air more and more.

† *Inferno*, c. 3.

‡ This is also different from those descriptions and plans of the *Inferno* with which I am acquainted, in which separate *circles* are assigned for the home of the *worthless souls*, and the Limbo which contained the distinguished men of antiquity. But Dante and Virgil did not *descend* from one place to the other, but merely crossed a stream; and the Limbo is called the *first circle*. Thus it appears to me that the two parts of the first circle were both Limbo, and that they were on the same level.

by those angels who were neither *for* God nor against Him, and by vacillating men who resemble them,—men who can neither be called good nor bad, and whom we see also so much despised by Macchiavelli, as they must always be by men of action, especially in times in which party spirit prevails. Among these last is *he who made the great refusal**, probably Pope Celestin. In the second division of Limbo, on the other side of Acheron, are the souls of those who had no fault except an ignorance of the Christian faith; we find here the great men of antiquity, in a city defended by seven walls, which are entered by seven gates,—the city doubtless of profane science, which was entered by the seven arts of the Trivium and Quadrivium. To this place belongs Virgil; from thence he came to Dante's assistance, and returning to it accompanied by him he is received by Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, who admit Dante among them as a sixth†. We may wonder that the two last should be classed so highly, to the exclusion of other Greeks and Latins, with whom Dante was also acquainted, and who are also placed in Limbo; and this would make one suppose that these last were only known to him by name, and that he was consequently not able to judge of them by their works.

In the second circle‡, where the torments begin, stands Minos, a demon by whom the souls are judged; and the

* Inferno, c. 3.

† *Ibid.* c. 4. Purgatorio, c. 22, v. 97.

‡ Inferno, c. 5.

step or circle to which he sentences them agrees with the number of times he twines his tail around them. Here carnal sinners are tormented by a wind, or rather whirlwind, which drags them along with it, dashing them against the rocks which surround the circle and render it rugged. Here are Paolo and Francesca, who are to be for ever carried along by this wind.

In the third circle* are the gluttons, guarded by Cerberus; they are stuck in the mud, and beaten down by an eternal rain. Here is Ciaccio the Florentine, not otherwise known, except as being mentioned in a novel of Boccaccio's†. Dante asks information from him respecting the future fate of the factions which in 1300 divided his country; and Ciaccio makes the prophecy which we have already quoted, and which reflects against both parties. Dante having placed so important a prediction in this early part of the poem, and in the mouth of such a man, shows both his contempt of these factions and his eagerness to make this prediction.

In the fourth circle‡, in which stands Pluto, sinners of two opposite descriptions are tormented, the avaricious and the prodigal, who push enormous weights against one another. Here are many churchmen, but they are none of them to be recognised, distorted as they are by their vices and by their punishments.

In the fifth circle§ is the Stygian Marsh, of which

* Inferno, c. 6.

† See Part I. Chapter XIII.

‡ Inferno, c. 7.

§ *Ibid.* c. 7, 8.

Phlegyas is the boatman; within it, above the waters, are the passionate, who tear and strike themselves in all sorts of ways. Among these is Filippo Argenti, Dante's despised and hated enemy. Under the water the slothful live in the mire*.

The sixth circle† and the three inferior ones are called the city of Dis, from one of the names given to Beelzebub. Here crimes and torments are increased, and here the flames begin. The entrance through the gate of this city is prohibited to Dante by the three Furies, who threaten him with the face of Gorgon; and Dante is first defended from this sight by Virgil's hands being placed before his eyes, and afterwards he is introduced into the city through the intervention of an angel, or heavenly messenger, who proudly comes and conquers. The whole of this contest, this new and great difficulty to his further descent into Hell and his continuance of the poem, is described at such length and with such minute detail, as suggests a doubt whether there are not here some important allusions to real facts in Dante's life, and to the difficulties which he had encountered; but this doubt is turned into certainty when, in the ninth canto, at the 61st verse, he apprises us himself of *the*

* Commentators have usually placed the passionate only in the fifth circle; but see canto 7, v. 117, which makes a distinction between the passionate and other sinners (v. 121), who are fixed in the slime; these we find by v. 123 are the slothful.

† Inferno, c. 9.

*doctrine which is concealed in the strange verses**. And if, as we ought to do, we believe in what Boccaccio says, we know that the poem had been resumed from the beginning of the eighth canto, either in 1306 or 1307; and if we also remember the fresh difficulties from which Dante suffered in those years, and the interruptions to his studics which they must have caused, we cannot doubt that it is these to which he alludes. In this sixth circle the proud, that is to say the arch-heretics and unbelievers†, are punished in fiery tombs‡; and among them (besides the Emperor Frederick II., a Cardinal

* O ye, with lofty intellects endow'd,
Behold the secret love intended here,
Which my mysterious minstrelsy would shroud.

Inferno, c. 9, v. 61-63.

† That arch-heretics and misbelievers are here punished as the proud, I am first led to suppose from canto 9, v. 91-94, and secondly from the poetical, or we may call it the symmetrical reason, that the seven mortal sins, which are expiated in Purgatory, should be also punished in Hell. Which admitted, we have already seen *voluptuousness*, *gluttony*, and *avarice* in the second, third, and fourth circles; and in the fifth, *anger* and *sloth*. There remains then *pride*, which I suppose punished in the sixth. The *envy* which generates wicked deeds is punished in the seventh and eighth,—the ninth circle remaining for Lucifer and the three arch-traitors.

‡ These tombs are compared (see canto 9, v. 112, 114) to those of Arles in Provence, and of Pola in Istria. Now comes the question, whether Dante had seen with his own eyes those two cities and their sepulchres. For some time I doubted this matter, but having searched through the Commentaries of the Minerva edition, I find there that in that life of Charlemagne which is attributed to Archbishop Turpin, mention is made of the Cemetery of Arles; and thus the source from which Dante derived this allusion seems to me plain. As regards Pola, it is possible that he may have derived it from some book, but it is not improbable that Dante himself might have visited that place.

whose name is not given, and Pope Anastasius) are Farinata degli Uberti, the great Ghibelline of a former generation, and Cavalcante Cavalcanti, the father of Guido, Dante's earliest friend. Inexorable Poet! according as he is influenced by his old or new opinions, he places in his *Inferno* Guelfs and Ghibellines, old and new friends or enemies, and even those who have always remained dear to him. In this part of his poem an admirable dialogue takes place between Dante and Farinata, which is interrupted by Cavalcanti*.

The seventh circle, which I suppose ought to be called *that of the envious who displayed their envy in deeds of violence*, is divided into three concentric and descending rounds or rings. In the first of these†, *the violent against their neighbours* are steeped in a river of blood, and are detained in it by Centaurs, who shoot arrows at them from its banks. In this river are both ancient and modern tyrants,—Ezzelino di Romano, Obizzo d' Este, with other murderers or ruffians, such as Guido da Monforte, who murdered Henry of England in the church of Viterbo, and Rinier da Corneto and Rinier de' Pazzi, two Tuscan robbers. In the second ring, *the violent against themselves* are transformed into dry stocks‡; among these is Pier de la Vigne, Frederick II.'s famous chancellor, who killed himself from grief at being calumniated to his master,—and this is one of Dante's most beautiful

* *Inferno*, c. 10, 11.

† *Ibid.* c. 12.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 13.

episodes; in it there is an invective against flatterers, which proves that the Ghibelline poet was not necessarily a worshiper of the idols of his party. There is here also one Lano, a Siennese, who, along with his fellow-citizens having received a defeat from the Aretines at Pieve del Toppo, killed himself in despair; one Jacopo da S. Andrea, a Paduan; and one unnamed Florentine who had hung himself in his own house. In the third ring*, *the violent against God*, such as Capaneus, *and the violent against nature*, such as Brunetto Latini, are tormented in a bare plain by having fire rained upon them. Brunetto prophesies to Dante how vainly he would exert himself amid factions; and he points out to him his own companions in punishment, Francesco d'Accorso, a famous Florentine jurisconsult, and an unnamed Bishop of Florence; there also are Guido Guerra, a Tuscan warrior famous in Dante's youth, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, Jacopo Rusticucci, Guglielmo Borsicri, and other Florentines known personally or by name to our Poet, who deeply compassionates them. Finally, on the ledge between this circle of the violent and that which follows it, the circle of the fraudulent†, are the usurers, among whom are a Gianfiliazzi and an Ubbriacchi of Florence; also a Scrovigni of Padua, who announces their soon being joined by Vitaliano, one of his fellow-citizens, and Giovanni Baiamonte or de' Lirti.

Precipitous, and without a path to descend it, is the

* Inferno, c. 14, 15, 16.

† *Ibid.* c. 17.

eighth circle, called especially Malebolge (the Evil Chasms); Virgil and Dante reach it on the shoulders of Geryon, a winged monster representing Fraud. The fraudulent envious are punished in this circle, which is divided into ten concentric chasms or ditches, united together by bridges of rock, with one exception, in which the rock is broken. In the first of these ten chasms* are the betrayers of women, demons lashing them with rods; among them, with other Bolognese, is Venedicio Caccianimico, who betrayed his sister, the beautiful Ghisola, to Azzo III. Marquis of Ferrara: also Jason, who betrayed Hypsipyle and Medea. In the second are flatterers immersed in filth, among whom are Alessio Interminelli of Lucca and Thais the courtesan. In the third chasm† are the Simonists, fixed in wells with their heads downwards; among these Dante only recognizes Pope Nicholas III., but he takes this opportunity of making a severe attack on his successors Boniface VIII. and Clement V. In the fourth chasm‡ are the diviners and sorcerers, who have their faces turned towards their backs; among these are Amphiaraus, Tiresias, Aruns, and Manto, the foundress of Mantua; and two modern citizens of this town, one Casalodi, and one Pinamonte de' Buonacossi, are severely reflected upon. Here he also finds Michael Scott, Guido Bonatti, and Asdente. In the fifth chasm§ are the barterers (or peculators, who

* *Inferno*, c. 18.

† *Ibid.* c. 20.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 19.

§ *Ibid.* c. 21, 22.

made traffic of the public offices for money), sticking in a lake of pitch, which the pitchforks of the demons prevent them from ever leaving: here is an unnamed Lucchese; and between the devils, poets, and spirits, follows a scene which to some may appear undignified, but no one can deny that it is very lively; there is Thibaut II. of Navarre, Fra Gomito of Gallura, and Michael Zanche, who also belonged to the island of Sardinia*. In the sixth chasm† are the hypocrites, weighed down with gilt mantles of lead; among these are the two Bolognese *Jovial Friars*,—the one a Guelf and the other a Ghibelline, who became together Podestàs of Florence in 1266. Here also are crucified, fixed to three stakes, Caiaphas and Annas, and those who joined with them in condemning Jesus Christ. In the seventh chasm‡ are thieves entwined in various ways by different serpents, and among them Vanni Fucci of Pistoia, who predicts to Dante the discomfiture of the Bianchi by Malaspina, who is called the *Vapour of the Val di Magra*; here Dante also finds five Florentines, at which the fierce exile congratulates his country on her infernal glory§. In the eighth are those who

* I do not add historical notices upon the personages here mentioned; for to do so, and to correct the errors of the commentators, would swell this book to too large a size.

† Inferno, c. 23.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 24, 25.

§ In this congratulation, or rather imprecation directed against Florence, Dante speaks of the evils wished for, not only by others, but by *Prato* itself; and this doubtless relates to the Florentine factions being rendered still more violent by the influence of the factions at Prato in 1304, when the Cardinal da Prato, who came as a peacemaker to both

advised fraud*, enveloped in flames, or rather turned into flames themselves: here Dante admonishes himself to restrain his severity, and not to place too many Florentines in Hell from a spirit of vengeance; thence he places here not one of his fellow-citizens, but mentions among the ancients Ulysses and Diomed, and among the moderns only Guido da Montefeltro, who gave Pope Boniface such wicked counsel†. In the ninth chasm‡ are those who have sown dissensions in families, states, or religion: these continue to carry their bodies along with them in a torn state. Here we find Mahomet, who predicts the end of Fra Dolcino, a heretic of Novara who died in 1307, the latest period to which the Inferno alludes. Here also are Ali; Pier da Medicina, who makes other prophecies relating to Italy; Curio, who advised Cæsar to cross the Rubicon; Mosca Lamberti, who said *a completed thing has a head (cosa fatta capo ha)*, in the deliberation against Buondelmonti in 1215; Bertram de Born, who made an English prince rebel against his father; and lastly, Geri del Bello, Dante's relation (*consorto*), who had been left unavenged. In the tenth chasm§ are alchemists (condemned with a wisdom superior to his age), falsifiers, forgers, and liars, punished by every sort of disease. Among these is a native of Arezzo

these cities, was ignominiously driven from Prato, and on his return to Florence, finding he could do no good there, he left her also.

* Inferno, c. 26, 27. † See Chap. II. Part I. of the First Volume.

‡ Inferno, c. 28, 29. § *Ibid.* c. 29, 30.

(whose name is not given), who had boasted that he was able to fly in the air; Capocchio, a Siennese; Gian Schicchi, a Florentine; and Master Adam of Brescia, who makes an invective against the Counts of Romena, for whom he had forged the Florentine florins: here is also Potiphar's wife, and Sinon the Greek.

Thus ends the circle of Malebolge, in which the Poet has accumulated all sorts of tortures, sinners, and satirical allusions. But we have not yet done with the fraudulent. The worst of them all, and indeed of all sinners, are the traitors, who are in the ninth circle*, the lowest part of Hell. As each circle becomes smaller than the one preceding it, this is reduced to the narrow size of a well, and there is no way of descent to it, but its walls are supported by Nimrod and the old giants who made war against Jove, who act as Caryatides; one of these lifts the two poets from the edge of the eighth circle†, and places them down at the bottom of the *ninth*. In each of its four concentric zones, which are all upon the same level, traitors are punished in ice, but in different ways. The first of these zones is the most spacious, and is called Cain; it contains those who have betrayed their own relations. Here are Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti, Mordrec son of Arthur King of England, Focaccia, Sassol Mascheroni, and Camicion de' Pazzi, who announces the coming of his relative

* Inferno, c. 31.

† *Ibid.* c. 32.

Carlino. The second zone* is called Antenora, and in it are those who have been traitors to their country, among whom are Bocca degli Abbati, who betrayed the Florentines at Monte Aperti; Buoso da Doara, who betrayed King Manfred; Beccaria, and Giovanni Soldanieri; Ganellone, who betrayed Charlemagne; Tebaldello of Faenza; and lastly, the two Pisans, the Archbishop Ruggieri and Count Ugolino. This last episode will perhaps excite our wonder and admiration above all others, coming as it does after so many and such various descriptions. Dante's creative genius indeed appears almost incredible, for we find it, towards the close of his long labours, not only full of life and spirit, but even more vigorous than when he first began his poem. The third zone, or Ptolomæa, contains traitors, so perverted that they have *the privilege*, as the Poet calls it, of their souls being thus cast down into torments while their bodies remain upon earth, where, animated by a demon, they appear alive. Here are Fra Alberico da Faenza and the Genoese Branco d'Oria, both alive, but introduced into the Inferno by this artifice of the Poet, who is here more than ever bitter in his satire. The fourth and last zone of the ninth and last circle is called Judas, in the middle of which are three arch-traitors,—Brutus, Cassius, and Judas,—all three chewed in the three mouths of the three faces of the great

* Inferno, c. 32, 33.

demon Dis or Beelzebub. In placing Brutus and Cassius with Judas, we see that Dante here judges in the spirit of a Ghibelline. Beelzebub is winged, and his boundless wings spread over the ice of Cocytus, which is the name of the marsh that spreads over the whole of the ninth circle: he is fixed in the midst, and the half of his monstrous body is in one hemisphere, while the other half is in the opposite one. Virgil, with Dante clinging to his neck, descends the long shaggy hide of this demon; and when he arrives at the middle of his body, and thus in the centre of the earth, Virgil turns himself round, and, carrying Dante along with him, remounts Beelzebub's legs; and passing through a hole or cavern they enter the other hemisphere, and again the stars, one day after their entrance through the Eternal Gate.

Such is the long plot or skeleton of the *Inferno*,—a skeleton without the flesh, and deprived of all its admirable graces; for however great and unique is the merit of the general design, which I have here endeavoured to explain, that of the execution is far superior. Whoever should penetrate into all the details of this poem, will understand why the author, who was desirous to try all images and all styles, has called his work a Comedy; he will also understand how these various and lively images, this style so varied and so unique in each word and syllable, have attracted through successive generations the constant admiration of intelligent readers. All writings

that have been written slowly and with deep thought, ought to be studied profoundly and read repeatedly; and this should be above all the case with the *Commedia*. Dante's style may be compared to those musical compositions which, although they ravish the soul when they are first heard, still leave only a confused impression; time and leisure are required to distinguish their various beauties; and it is only after hearing them many times that we begin by degrees completely to understand them.

But deserving as the greatest part of the *Commedia* is of our admiration, do not let our understandings be dazzled, nor our judgements influenced, by the splendour of genius; we excuse Dante because he wrote excited both by love and hatred; the object of his love was removed, while his spirit of hatred was in full life, and nursed and increased by his ruined hopes. But while we excuse him, let us not forget that he erred,—erred in the personal and almost womanish aversions which he felt towards an innumerable number of his fellow-citizens, neighbours, and others in public and private life, and which he expressed in the most bitter, vindictive, and unchristian manner, authoritatively and fiercely placing them among the damned. His images and tortures could only belong to an age not yet emerged from barbarism, which adopted the severity of our divine religion and exaggerated it, while it neglected its mercy and mildness. In Dante's times, when cruelty was often

called justice, he probably supposed he was no more than just.

And he certainly was just in his invectives against the factions and the immorality which then existed in the cities of Italy. In the *Inferno* there are four invectives against Florence*, and one against each of the cities of Pistoia, Lucca, Sienna, Pisa, and Genoa†; these invectives seem to increase in bitterness as he proceeds in his poem. Throughout the *Inferno* (not so much owing to the subject, as to the time and temper in which it was written), hatred is predominant, notwithstanding it is in some small degree softened by some gentle speeches of Beatrice, as well as some addressed to Virgil, and by the episode of Francesca. But Dante was not entirely made up of hatred,—love, infinite love, dwelt within him. Those who only read the *Inferno*, and are ignorant of the Angels and the gentle sentiments of the *Purgatorio*, the Beatrice of the Terrestrial Paradise and the joys of the Celestial, only know the stern part of Dante's character and are ignorant of its tenderness. Who fears not to nurse within himself his bitter passions, may read the *Inferno* over and over again,—who wishes to soften them with gentle sentiments, should turn to the *Purgatorio*,—who desires to raise his soul to supernatural

* *Inferno*, c. 6, v. 49; c. 15, v. 73; c. 16, v. 73; c. 26, v. 1.

† *Ibid.* c. 35, v. 10; c. 20, v. 41; c. 29, v. 121; c. 33, v. 79; c. 33, v. 151.

objects, should read the *Paradiso*,—but who would wish to know Dante truly, should study his whole poem, which contains, sometimes in plain and sometimes in mysterious language, the treasures of his rich genius.

CHAPTER IX.

DANTE AT PARIS AND IN ENGLAND.—THE EMPERORS
RUDOLPH AND ALBERT OF AUSTRIA, AND HENRY VII.
OF LUXEMBURG.

1308—APRIL, 1311.

And did the world but know how he sustain'd
His hardships, begging crusts from door to door,
Still greater glory had his virtue gain'd.

Paradiso, c. 6, v. 140-142.

HAVING finished the *Inferno*, and left it with Fra Ilario, Dante, according to all probability, quitted the Lunigiana, and went to Paris in 1308. He travelled through the two *Rivieras* of Genoa, of which he has given us some reminiscences in the *Purgatorio*; where he mentions the two extreme points of these coasts he says:—

The most uncouth and most deserted way
'Twixt Lerici and Turbià, is a stair,
Compared to this, full easy to essay.

Purgatorio, c. 3, v. 49-51.

And again, where he points out Noli, as one of the steepest of descents*.

From thence, on his way to Paris, he must have passed through Provence, and most probably through Avignon, the Babylon then so much abhorred by all good Italians, the residence of the Gascon, Clement V. There is no mention nor allusion to this city in the *Commedia*, but it may easily be imagined what thoughts and what tumultuous passions it must have awakened in the bosom of the old Florentine ambassador to the Pontifical court, now a wanderer and an exile,—and in the Poet, who was destined one day to correct the vices of his age. Boccaccio gives the following account of this journey, and of the exile's residence at Paris:—"Since he saw every way of returning to his country shut out on all sides, and his hopes becoming day by day fainter, he not only abandoned Tuscany, but Italy, crossing the mountains which divide it from the province of Gaul†, and went to Paris. There he gave himself up entirely to the study of theology and philosophy; returning also to the pursuit of other sciences, which perhaps from other impediments he had abandoned. And during the time he spent there so studiously it happened that," etc.‡ It is clear from this, that Dante had returned with fresh

* *Purgatorio*, c. 4, v. 25.

† These mountains were the Apennines that stretch along the two Rivièras to Provence.

‡ Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 36.

ardour to a studious life, and that he directed especially his attention to those studies which would assist him in the remaining two parts of his poem ; and of this we find abundant proofs in the Purgatorio and Paradiso. " This Poet," continues Boccaccio*, " was moreover of wonderful capacity, of exceedingly strong memory, and of clear intellect ; insomuch that while he was at Paris, on the occasion of a certain disputation *de quolibet*, which was held in a school of theology, he maintained fourteen different questions (or theses) proposed by different learned men, and on different subjects ; and without allowing any time to intervene, collected and repeated these in due order as they had been proposed, together with the arguments advanced for and against them ; and afterwards, following the same order, he solved them with much subtlety, answering the arguments on the other side, which thing was reputed almost a miracle by all beholders."

It is also recorded† that Dante used very often to go into the University and maintain theses upon all sciences, against all who thought fit to dispute with him, or to be his opponents. " Having in his youth," says Benvenuto da Imola, " attended to the study of natural and moral philosophy in Florence, Bologna, and Padua, in his riper years, when he was an exile, he devoted himself to that of Holy Theology in Paris, where he acquired so much

* Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 58.

† *Geneal. degli Dei*, xiv. 11.

renown that he was by some called a poet, by others a philosopher, and by others a theologian*." We might add, in addition to these proofs of Dante's visit to Paris, a third quotation from Boccaccio, several from Villani and from other later writers†, but they would be all unnecessary after that chapter of Boccaccio from which we have given extracts. Boccaccio was born but a few years after 1313, and about 1320 he was taken to Paris by his father, who went there on some mercantile affairs. Italian merchants used at that time frequently to visit the French capital, and the memory of this is preserved by the name of one of its most commercial streets, which is called the *Street of the Lombards*. Thus Dante might have found there many of his countrymen; but we are led to conclude, from the totally different object of his journey, that his manner of life at Paris differed widely from theirs, and that he lived apart and solitary. This is confirmed by an editor of an abridgement of Boccaccio's Life of Dante, who adds, "that during his studies at Paris he was not without great need of the necessaries of life‡." There is however an undoubted reminiscence of his residence at the French capital in that passage of the *Paradiso*, in which St. Thomas, who was himself the

* Mur. Ant. Ital. tom. i. p. 1036.

† Lett. a Petrarca, Ediz. Min. v. 133; Rer. Ital. xiii. p. 508. Jacopo Filippo da Bergamo (quoted by Arrivabene, p. 161), who prolongs Dante's residence at Paris as late as 1313, which we shall see is impossible. Domenico di Messer Bandino d'Arezzo, quoted by Pelli, p. 132.

‡ Ed. Min. tom. v. p. 15.

great luminary of the University of Paris, points out to Dante the great doctors of theology, and says,—

This flame, from whom to me reverts thine eye,
Is one who, pondering mortal follies, thought
That death's approach was made too tardily,
Sigieri's* clear and everlasting light;
Who, in the street of straw as erst he taught,
Raised by the truths he told invidious spite.

Paradiso, c. 10, v. 133–138.

The commentators add, that this *Via degli Strami* (straw-littered street) was the old *Rue des Fouarres*, near the *Place Maubert*, called so because, there being no benches in the schools, the students carried to them straw or corn, and on solemn occasions changed it and brought fragrant herbs there. Thus then our great and studious exile, poor and in want, walked down that street, and sat upon that straw. He was the adversary and the angry deserter of the Guelf party, and the personal enemy of the Princes of France, whom he was about to denounce in his writings; therefore his poverty, which was perhaps in part voluntary, was not to be wondered at. And real poverty, which is bitter to all, more especially to those unused to it, and is felt still more in a busy and rich city, must have inflicted some pangs on Dante; these he probably records in the verses quoted at the beginning of the present chapter. But here we also see his consola-

* Sigebert, a monk of the Abbey of Gemblours, who was in high repute at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century. *Dict. de Moreri*. (Cary.)

tion in his hope of future glory,—a hope which rises naturally in strong minds, and especially in the studious. Study was necessary to Dante before and beyond all other comforts, and Paris supplied liberal opportunities for study. Even in our own days we have seen exiles take refuge there; some of them, poor students like Dante, freely receiving the same advantages, while others, by a still more extensive liberality, have been raised to professors' chairs, and from thence have imparted knowledge to their countrymen and companions, as well as to their generous hosts.

If Dante ever went to England, it must have been at this time from Paris. The only ground for supposing that he visited it is from a passage in Boccaccio, who, in a poetical epistle to Petrarch, says that Dante visited "*Parisios dudum extremosque Britannos*.*" Others add that he was at the University of Oxford; but there is nothing to be said either in favour of or against these conjectures. Edward II., of the Plantagenet race, then reigned in England, and Philip the Fair, the enemy of Pope Boniface and the friend of Clement V., was still reigning in France. In 1307, Philip obtained from Clement V. the condemnation of the Templars, and in 1309 and the succeeding years he sent them to the stake. Dante must thus have been an eye-witness of the whole of this tragedy, and (although the University which he frequented participated in it) he denounces it

* Paris formerly, and the remote Britain. (Ed. Min. v. 133.)

in those verses which he wrote against Philip the Fair, where, after having related the outrage against Boniface, he adds :—

I see the modern Pilate, whom avails
No cruelty to sate, and who, unbidden
Into the Temple sets his greedy sails.

Purgatorio, c. 20, v. 91-93.

The whole of the *Purgatorio* is full of French words and allusions to France.

But we must now turn to Germany, (which country was so long closely connected with the history of Italy), and to the election of a new Emperor. This election took place shortly before or after Dante's arrival at Paris, and was the cause of his leaving that city. If until now we have made no mention of the emperors, it was because in no other period of the Middle Ages had they interfered as little in the affairs of Italy. Could this perhaps have caused arts, letters, and poetry to germinate there, and a Dante to arise? If so, this non-interference was mutually advantageous to both countries, and so it was considered by one of the greatest men that ever ascended the throne of the Cæsars, Rudolph, the noble founder of the House of Austria. He was a simple nobleman of the House of Thierstein, and only Count of Habsburgh, by his grandmother Ida, but he was distinguished as a warrior during the late vacancies and contests for the empire; and after the fruitless elections of William of

Holland, Richard of England, and Alphonso of Castile, Rudolph was elected King of Germany and of the Romans in 1273; but he never crossed the Alps to be crowned King of Italy at Monza, or Emperor at Rome. It is recorded that he said: "None of my predecessors have ever returned from Italy without a diminution of their rights and authority." Keeping himself at a distance, he continued at peace with the Popes and the Italians, to whom he left undisputed the rights that had been hitherto contested over La Marca*, over Romagna, and over the whole inheritance of the Countess Mathilda. From this political moderation as regards Italy, on the part of the great Rudolph, the Popes have derived, not the right, but the substance of their temporal power; to it also may be attributed the development of the liberties of the Italian cities, and the rise of the House of Austria. Rudolph, devoting himself only to Germany, was better obeyed there than the powerful Saxon, Franconian, and Suabian emperors who had preceded him; he increased his hereditary dominions more than any of them; he deprived his personal enemy Ottocar, King of Bohemia, of Austria; and when Rudolph died, in 1298, he left it as an inheritance to his son Albert, who was also elected to succeed him as King of the Romans.

Albert followed his father's policy, and did not interfere with Italy, but devoted himself to the aggrandise-

* The March of Ancona.

ment of his hereditary dominions. He was however a very inferior man to Rudolph; he had less authority in Germany, and he desired to increase his inheritance, not by conquest at the expense of his neighbours, but by usurping the rights of his subjects. From his tyranny arose that memorable and glorious resistance from whence the Swiss derived their lasting liberty, which was founded on union, moderation, and justice. This great struggle happened in 1307, while Dante was describing the great events of the whole of Europe; but he did not even deign to glance at these heroic mountaineers, who are now so venerated, but whose obscurity and poverty then concealed them from the eyes of the haughty and corrupted citizens of Italy. On the first of May, 1308, Albert was treacherously murdered, out of personal revenge, by his nephew John. The traitor was repulsed from the thresholds of these republican mountaineers, who were the mortal but generous enemies of the murdered Emperor. Their moderation has been celebrated in the poetry of Schiller. Dante records this murder in a different spirit, and speaks of it in almost rejoicing terms. Dante had however a heart to appreciate whatever was generous, but his Ghibelline spirit could never pardon the first two Austrian Emperors for abandoning Italy, to which he attributed the authority the opposite party had obtained. Nevertheless he places Rudolph in Purgatory in the valley of the kings, but he points him out in the following manner:—

“He who sits highest, and the semblance bears
 Of having not fulfill'd his part, and who
 Moves not his lips to join the others' prayers,
 Was Emperor Rudolph; who the power possess'd
 To heal the wounds which Italy o'erthrew,
 Those wounds too deadly to be now redress'd.”

Purgatorio, c. 7, v. 91-96.

But his reproaches here against Rudolph are slight, compared to those against him in the previous canto, when he spoke of him and Albert together; in this last passage we perceive that, at the time he was writing, the news of Albert's death must have been fresh, and that Dante was entertaining hopes of his successor. Dante and Virgil meet in Purgatory Sordello the Troubadour of Mantua. Virgil, on being asked to what country he belonged, scarcely mentions the name of *Mantua*, when Sordello, not waiting to know further who he was, embraces him as a fellow-citizen; Dante then breaks forth as follows, and condemns the whole of Italy:—

Ah, servile Italy! abode of woe!
 Bark without pilot in a stormy sky!
 Queen once of fair domains, now fallen low!
 With such warm zeal that noble spirit came,
 A welcome to his countrymen to pay,
 But for the sweet sound of his country's name;
 While now thy living ones are constant foes,
 And each one gnaws the other, even they
 Whom the same moat, the self-same walls enclose.
 Search, wretched one, thy sea-girt shores around;
 Then inward turn to thine own breast, and see
 If any part in joyous peace be found.

What boots it that Justinian's skill replaced
 The bit, if empty now the saddle be? *
 Without it thou hadst been far less disgraced ;
 Ah ye ! who should to things divine be given,
 And let Augustus in his saddle sit,
 (If ye had listen'd to the voice of heaven),
 Look how the beast, refusing all command,
 For want of spurs obeyeth not the bit,
 Since to the bridle ye have put your hand.
 O Austrian Albert ! who desertest her,
 (Ungovernable now and savage grown)
 When most she needed pressing with the spur ;
 May on thy race Heaven's *righteous judgement* fall ;
 And be it signally and plainly shown
 With terror thy successor to appal !
 Since by thy lust yon distant lands to gain,
 Thou and thy sire have suffer'd wild to run
 What was the garden of thy fair domain †.
 Come, see the Capulets and Montagues—
 Monaldi—Filippeschi, rockless one !
 These now in fear—already wretched those ‡.
 Come, cruel one ! and see what ills endure
 Thy nobles, and avenge their injuries ;
 See too if Santafore be secure §.

* Justinian delivered Italy from the Goths, and reformed the laws ; but his exertions are of no avail, if she is to be no longer under the control of his successors. Italy is described under the figure of an untamed steed. (Wright.)

† Italy, which Albert and his father neglected for the sake of their German possessions, is by Dante called the garden of the empire. Begging Dante's pardon, the desire for power in Germany was more natural and legitimate than that for power in Italy.

‡ Ghibelline families : the Montagues and Capulets belonged to Verona, and were already oppressed. The Monaldi and Filippeschi belonged to Orvieto, and were in fear of sharing their fate. The two former families were afterwards celebrated in the poetry of Shakespeare.

§ Santafore, a place between Sienna and Pisa, mentioned as an

Come, and behold thy Rome, how she doth mourn ;
 A lonely widow, day and night she cries,
 ' When will my Cæsar to my arms return ? '
 Come, and behold thy people, how they love !
 And if no pity our distress inspire,
 Let blushes for thy reputation move.

Purgatorio, c. 6, v. 76-117.

At the death of Albert of Austria, Charles of Valois, who is already too well known to us, aspired to be his successor. He was favoured naturally by his royal brother, Philip IV., but he was opposed by Pope Clement, who no longer adhered to the French princes. By the Pope's influence, Henry of Luxemburg was elected; and thus Clement temporized more than ever between the French and Imperial, or Guelf and Ghibelline, parties. The election took place in November, 1308, about the time of Dante's journey to, or arrival at, Paris. We may be surprised that Dante, as we hear from Boccaccio, was opposed to this election, which decided against his great enemy Charles of Valois; but as Henry was, like his two predecessors, merely a little German prince, Dante must have had little expectation that the long-desired journey to Italy would be fulfilled. It is said that this wish was very general, not only among the Ghibellines, but also among many others, both Italians and foreigners. No Emperor had visited Italy for seventy years, and thus not within the lifetime of any of the present generation. Scarcely had Henry VII. been elected, than he prepared

instance of the desolations committed by robbers, through the inertness of the Government. (Wright.)

for this visit by settling the affairs of Germany, and actually set out in the summer of 1310. Robert, the new King of Naples, the son and successor of Charles II., had already preceded him in Italy a few months before. Thus the heads of the Guelf and Ghibelline factions, the two most powerful princes of Italy, had both descended into that peninsula; and the Pope temporized.

Dante, between his desire of the Emperor's presence in Italy, and his fear that his desire would not be gratified, had shortly before written poetical imprecations against Henry's predecessors, which might be considered also as admonitions to that Emperor; he now expressed his own joy and that of his companions in exile, in a letter which we possess: it has no date, but it must have been written about the time that Henry was on the move, and therefore about the middle of the year 1310. It is written like his other letters in Latin, and it is directed: "To all and to each of the Kings of Italy, and to the Senators of Rome, and the Dukes, Marquises, Counts, and all the people, the lowly Italian Dante Allighieri of Florence, who was banished undeservedly, prays for peace."

This is indeed a most ambitious direction, and it would make one suppose that this epistle (like that which we have seen directed to *the Princes of the Earth*, which was written just after the death of Beatrice) was perhaps unpublished, and merely an outpouring of his inward thoughts, a literary and almost poetical fiction of

his fancy. It is full of the erudition and learned arguments which were indeed so much the taste of the age, but were little adapted to move the good, uncultivated Emperor, and his Germans who were like him. It begins with Biblical expressions denoting the joy of the writer; he then continues with a little more precision: "Rejoice now, Italy, that mercy is to be shown unto thee; for thou wilt soon be envied by the whole world, even by the Saracens, because thy spouse, who is the delight of his age and the glory of thy people, the compassionate Henry, the noble Augustus, and Cæsar, hastens to thy nuptials. Dry, O most beautiful one, thy tears, and cast away the garb of grief, because he is near who will free thee from the dungeons of the wicked, who, striking the perpetrators of felony, will condemn them with the edge of the sword, and will portion out his vineyard to other labourers, who will gather the fruits of justice at the time of the vintage.

"But will he have mercy on no one? Rather he will pardon all who shall ask for mercy; because he is Cæsar, and his pity descends from the fountain of all pity; his judgement-seat abhors all cruelty.

"O blood of the Lombards, lay aside the cruelty thou hast hitherto maintained; and if aught of the race of the Trojans and Latins remains within ye, give it place; so that when the lofty eagle, descending like a thunderbolt, shall be before us, she may see her scat-

tered eaglets, and *not** the seat of her race occupied by young crows. Nation of Scandinavia, then act boldly, so that thou mayest enjoy the presence (as far as appertains to thee) of him whose arrival is meritorious. Do not be carried away by deceptive cupidity, who like a syren, with I know not what blandishments, destroys the vigilance of reason. Let your lips be busied in confessions of your subjection to him, and sing with the psalter of penitence; considering that who resists power resists the ordinances of God, and who opposes the divine ordinances is like to the impotent one who kicks, and it is hard to kick against the pricks.

“But ye who weep in oppression, take courage, because your salvation is near at hand. . . . Pardon, pardon now, ye dear ones, who along with me have suffered injuries. . . . From God emanates the power of Peter and Cæsar†. . . . Watch then all, and rise to meet your King, O inhabitants of Italy; not only preserve your obedience to him, but as free men your governments.

“And not only do I exhort you to rise and meet him, but also that you reverence his presence. Ye that drink from his fountains and navigate his seas, and tread the sands of the islands, and the summits of the Alps which

* I have added this *not*, although it is not in the edition of Witte, but without it there appears no sense.

† The literal translation is: *God at once biforks (strides over) the power of Peter and Cæsar.* (TRANSL.)

belong to him, and who each enjoy public property, and possess private property through the restraints of his law, do not like the unknowing ones deceive yourselves. Does not God's having prophesied a Roman Prince shine by marvellous effects? And does not the Church through Christ's words confess that it was afterwards confirmed by the truth? . . . This is he whom Peter, God's vicar, admonishes us to honour; upon whom Clement (now the successor of St. Peter through the light of apostolical succession) beams with favour, in order that, where the spiritual ray is not sufficient, there should beam the splendour of the lesser light*."

And thus he concludes, artfully making use of the Pope's (at least apparent) consent to the Emperor's journey, to unite in its favour both the Guelfs and Ghibellines. The barbarous style, which my readers must have observed in the fragments I have quoted, is still more barbarous and involved in those parts which I have omitted. Nor is it different from Dante's style in his other letters, which, according to Villani, were admired in that age. That *bifurcation*, or striding over both the temporal and spiritual powers, should be remarked, for it was the grand idea of the time, and that on which Dante afterwards wrote his book on Monarchy. But what ought above all to be observed is that beautiful warning he gives to the whole of the Italians, "not only to preserve your obedience to him, but *as free men*

* Witte, *Lett. di Dante*, Ep. 5, p. 17.

your governments ;" this appears like an admonition to the cities not to sacrifice their self-governments and their own liberties, for Dante's loyalty never was nor could be servility. And though we consider the Ghibelline party to be the worse cause, and though we condemn Dante's abandoning the Guelfs for it, still we must remember that both parties were adopted by many from honest and sincere motives, and probably also by Dante. The Guelfs, no less than the Ghibellines, professed loyalty to the Empire, and they differed only in their interpretation of what it meant, and its limits, and in what each party desired for the future destiny of Italy. The Ghibellines hoped principally for unanimity, the Guelfs for independence; both which desires are not only excusable, but most praiseworthy. When, two hundred years later, Macchiavelli invoked some Prince to reunite Italy, he differed little from Dante when he invoked the Veltro (Greyhound) in the Inferno, the Captain in the Paradiso, and in this letter the Emperor Henry VII.; and even after Macchiavelli many were in this manner Ghibellines, and cherished the noble idea which belonged to that party, namely, the reunion of Italy,—a noble idea, but one which the experience of at least eight centuries (reckoning from no earlier than Conrad the Salic) has proved to be impracticable. Italy would have been happier, if then, or at a later period, her sons had been unanimous in seeking for the improvement of her actual condition, instead of the restoration of the

Empire, or of universal sovereignty. The Guelfs have at least been not such dreamers as the Ghibellines.

Henry VII.'s visit is one of the most instructive and best narrated episodes of Italian history; it has been partly related by our prince of chroniclers, Dino Compagni, to whom we always willingly turn; Giovanni Villani gives us the whole history, and a certain bishop *in partibus* of Butrinto gives us all the details. This bishop was an honest German, but we do not know to what family or city he belonged. He was a friend and attached servant to Henry, and, in his office of bishop, a servant to the Pope; to the latter he renders an account of the whole of the Emperor's progress, which he for the most part accompanied. Though he is deficient in elegance of style, this is made up for by his simplicity and sincerity, and he sometimes does not abstain from finding fault with the Pope. This narrative, if translated into Italian, might bear a comparison with those writings of the fourteenth century which are both chronicles and models of history*.

Our Dino gives a lively picture of Henry. "He was," says he, "a wise man, of noble blood, just, and famous, of great loyalty, of prowess in arms, and of a noble race;

* We hope that much light will be thrown on this journey of the Emperor Henry, as well as on Dante's times generally, by Herr Dönniges, a young German, who is illustrating and writing a history of all the Emperors, and has already collected some precious documents relating to Henry of Luxemburg from the Archives of Turin.

a man of a great intellect, and of great temperance; forty years of age, of a middle size, a fine speaker, and of noble bearing; he squinted a little. . . False fame accused him wrongfully. The Ghibellines said: 'He will not look on any one but Guelfs.' And the Guelfs said: 'He will receive no one but Ghibellines*.'"

If it still had been possible for an Emperor to restore peace to Italy, Henry would have done it; but it already had become a dream.

He arrived at Lausanne in the summer of 1310, with a small attendance, and he remained there many months waiting for his forces, and receiving embassies from the Italian cities. And some from all, or almost all, came there, Florence excepted, for her rulers had become still more violent Neri Guelfs, and feared the return of the exiles. Villani tells us: "The Emperor asked why they were not there? and he was answered, that the Florentines held him in suspicion. Then the Emperor said, 'They do wrong, for we wished to find the Florentines faithful to us, and united, and not divided; and we intended to make that city our court, and the first in our Empire.' And it is positively known, from persons who were about him, that until that time his intentions were favourable†."

Leaving Lausanne, and passing through the states of the Count of Savoy, he crossed Mont Cenis, descended to Susa, and rested at Turin in October 1310. Many of

* Dino Com. pp. 146, 150.

† Villani, p. 447.

the Guelf cities, to prevent the increase of the Imperial army, forbade any citizen leaving his own territory, or, as it was then called, his own *comitato* or county; but notwithstanding this, Guelfs and Ghibellines, the ascendant party and the exiles, with followers or without them, all hastened to Turin to meet the Emperor. Many of the Italians, who were thus collected there, advised that none of the exiles should be recalled before the coronation; but the Emperor's northern subjects were more impartial, and advised a contrary proceeding. And the honest German followed the latter advice; it was what he had always intended to do, and he began immediately by these two provisions: namely, to recall the exiles of all parties, and to place Imperial Vicars in all the cities. It had been an old practice to place Imperial or Royal Vicars in the cities. Charles of Naples, at the time of the great power of Anjou, had done it to a great extent, taking on himself the *signoria* or supremacy of the cities, and afterwards exercising it by these magistrates or Vicars, without a Podestà, or with Podestàs placed under them. But Henry's Vicars differed from these; for the Emperor, possessing the rights of the Empire, did not require that the supremacy of the cities should be given up to him. Thus these Imperial Vicars were more and less than the Royal ones; they possessed more right and less power, because, instead of exercising like those of Charles a new authority which had been voluntarily given up to them, they were merely

supported by the ancient but weakened power of the Empire. Henry's innovation, though at first it might have excited some alarm, was in fact merely a change of title; for those who ruled in the cities, under the names of Podestà or Captain of the People, now assumed the new title of Vicar, and continued equally in power. Thus it had always happened. Frederick Barbarossa dismissed the Consuls, freely elected by the towns, and placed in them others approved of by himself; but these Imperial Consuls acted more for the interests of the city than for those of the Empire. Frederick then, and afterwards his grandson Frederick II., substituted Podestàs for Consuls; but the Podestàs soon became citizen magistrates opposed to the Emperors, and afterwards became tyrants themselves. Henry now put Vicars in their place, but they also equally became independent tyrants; and in the following century the title of Duke, given by the Emperors to several new Princes, had the same effect and the same result.

Leaving Turin, and visiting one city after another, the good Emperor placed Vicars in all, and restored everywhere the Guelf exiles to the Ghibelline cities, and the Ghibelline exiles to the Guelf cities. He visited Chieri, Asti, Casale, Vercelli, Novara, and at last arrived at Milan, where, notwithstanding some secret and slight opposition on the part of the Torriani, the chiefs of the Guelf party there, the iron crown was placed on his head on the day of the Epiphany, 1311. He received there the

oath of allegiance from almost all the cities except Genoa, Florence, and Venice, and he sent Vicars and Ghibelline exiles to Como and Mantua, and Guelfs into Brescia, Piacenza, Bologna, and other Ghibelline cities. In Verona the Ghibellines (directed probably by the Scaligers) refused to receive the San Bonifazios, the old chiefs of the Guelf party of that city*.

Henry now believed he had established peace in Lombardy, and wishing that it should be maintained in this quiet state during his journey to Rome, he proposed to take along with him twenty-five Guelf and twenty-five Ghibelline hostages, each named by the opposite party; he also proposed to make the Count of Savoy Vicar General of Lombardy. But amid these selections of hostages disputes arose, and there was a difficulty also in raising money to pay the expenses of the Vicar General; suspicion fell at once on both the Visconti and the Torriani, the chiefs of the Ghibellines and Guelfs at Milan; but the Visconti having exculpated themselves, the whole suspicion rested on the Torriani, who were expelled from that city, where they had in the preceding century so often governed, and they never more returned to it. The Visconti succeeded to their power, and the Ghibelline party reigned undisputed in Milan; this was the most lasting change that ensued from Henry's journey†. The principal Guelf cities of Lombardy now rejected his authority; Cremona, Brescia, and Crema

* Ep. Butrinto, 887-895.

† Murat. ann. 1811.

rose in rebellion, and expelled the Imperial Vicars and the Ghibellines, who had been so lately restored to their native cities; Lodi merely expelled the Ghibellines, and retained the Vicar. Henry was at that time, the 11th of April, 1311, celebrating Easter at Pavia (Milan being under an interdict), when he found himself obliged to support his authority in Lombardy by force of arms; he prepared to march against the rebellious cities, especially Brescia, but the Ghibelline and Tuscan exiles made a great outcry at the prospect of this delay, as they expected him in Tuscany; and a few days afterwards we find a letter of Dante's, dated the 16th of April, which proves that our Poet had already returned to that province, after having, (as it would appear) at some place, we know not where, also saluted the good Emperor, the last hope of the exiles.

* Ep. Butrinto, 896-898.

CHAPTER X.

DANTE'S RETURN INTO ITALY.—DEATH OF HENRY VII.

APRIL, 1311—AUGUST, 1314.

He comes in search of Liberty: how dear
 She is, he knows who life for her resign'd.

Purgatorio, c. 1, v. 71, 72.

BOCCACCIO, after having spoken of Dante's residence at Paris, continues to relate that, "Hearing that Henry of Germany had set out to subdue Italy, a portion of which had rebelled against his Majesty*, and that he was already laying siege to Brescia with a great force, he, Dante, judging from many reasons that the Emperor would be the conqueror, began to entertain hopes that through Henry's power and justice he might be restored to Florence, although he knew that city was his enemy. Therefore Dante, having recrossed the Alps, united him-

* The title of *Majesty* given here by an author of the *fourteenth* century, to the *Emperor King*, shows those to be in the wrong who suppose it to be an innovation of the *sixteenth* century. See also Dante's letter further on.

self with many of the enemies of the Florentines and of their party; and they with embassies and letters endeavoured to withdraw the Emperor from the siege of Brescia, in order that he might lay siege to Florence, as the most important of his enemies, showing him that if she were conquered little or no trouble would remain to him, and he would speedily obtain possession and dominion over the whole of Italy*."

Thus Boccaccio assigns Dante's return from France to the time of the siege of Brescia, which is not possible, since our Poet writes from the founts of the Arno on the 16th of April, when Henry had scarcely left Pavia. But we must infer that it was probable that he had only lately returned to Italy; for it appears by his letter that he must have seen Henry in one of those cities of Piedmont or Lombardy which the Emperor had already visited, and that there Dante had united himself with his companions in exile.

This letter has come down to us both in its original Latin and in an old translation into the vulgar tongue †, the superscription of which is as follows:—

"To the most glorious and most happy victor, and only Lord, Messer Arrigo, by Divine Providence King of

* Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 37.

† Of this remarkable epistle we had only an Italian version, until the original Latin was discovered not many years since in the Library of St. Mark. It appears that even the most learned men of that time had not attained to a correct taste in Latin composition, but still imitated the bad models of the later Empire. (TRANSL.)

the Romans and ever August*, his most devoted Dante Alighieri (a Florentine, and undeservedly banished), and all Tuscans universally who desire peace, kiss the earth before your feet."

And here there is no doubt, according to the words of Boccaccio, that Dante wrote not only in the name of the Tuscan exiles, but was commissioned by them to do so. He says in substance that their expulsion had been unjust, and that they had hitherto rested their hopes on Henry; but now it was said that he had been delaying or was turning back. "Nevertheless we hope and believe in thee, affirming that thou art the minister of God, and the son of the Church, and one who will promote the glory of Rome. Therefore I, who write as well for myself as for others, saw thy most benign countenance, and heard thy most gracious words, as were befitting the imperial majesty when my hands touched thy feet, and my lips paid their just debt, when my spirit exulted within me. But we marvel that thou tarriest so inertly, and, already victorious, that thou lingerest longer in the valley of the Po, and that thou shouldest abandon Tuscany and leave her and forget her. For if thou decidest that around the confines of Lombardy are encircling districts sufficient to defend the Empire, this is not exactly as we think; for the glorious government of the Romans is not limited to the confines of Italy," etc.

* In the original Latin the word is *Augustus*, in the Italian translation *accescitore*. (TRANSL.)

Then he brings forward examples, and, among others, quotes the words Curio makes use of to Cæsar, to induce him to pass the Rubicon,—those same words for which Dante punishes Curio by placing him in Hell*. He then continues:—“Thus during the winter thou tarriest at Milan, and thou dost suppose by cutting off its heads that thou wilt destroy this most poisonous of Hydras. . . What wilt thou proclaim that thou hast done, O sole Prince of the world? When thou shalt have bent the neck of contumacious Cremona, will not the sudden frenzy fly to Brescia or Pavia? Yes, certainly it will do so. When in the same manner these cities shall have been punished, immediately will another frenzy kindle in Vercelli or Bergamo, or elsewhere; and thou wilt have continually to do thus, until thou hast obliterated the original cause of this loathsomo disease and torn out the root of so much error. Then will the stinging branches dry up along with the trunk. My Lord, thou art the most excellent prince of princes, and yet thou dost not comprehend at a glance from thy lofty eminence, where the Fox from whence proceeds this filth cowers safe from the pursuit of the hunters. This crafty beast drinks not in the flowing Po, nor in thy Tiber, but his frauds continue to poison the waters of the river Arno. And perhaps

* See Inferno, c. 28, v. 97–102. Curio's speech, according to Dante, is “*Che il fornito sempre con danno l'attendere sofferse.*” (The man prepared always with injury endured delay.) Carlyle's Translation of Dante. (TRANSL.)

thou dost not know it? Florence is the name of this deadly monster. This is the viper which tears the entrails of its mother* ; this is the sick sheep whose infection contaminates the flock of its lord ; this is the impatient Amata who, having refused the fated marriage, feared not to espouse her daughter to one forbidden by the fates†. . . . Truly she seeks to tear her mother with the ferocity of a viper. . . . Truly she breathes vile exhalations, spreading contagion from whence the sheep near and far sicken. . . . Truly she contradicts the ordinances of God, adoring the idol of her own will, insomuch that, having scorned her own legitimate king, the frantic one is not ashamed to treat with a king not her own for conditions which are not in his power. . . . Then tarry no longer. . . . The Philistines will fly and Israel will be free. Then our inheritance, for the loss of which we incessantly weep, will be immediately restored to us. For as now, recollecting that we belong to holy Jerusalem and are in Babylon as exiles, we weep, so then misery and confusion will pass away from us, when we are again citizens and inhale peace and joy. . . . Written in Tuscany, near the founts of the Arno, on the 16th day of the month of April, 1311, the first year of

* This superstition about the young viper is recorded in Sir Thomas Brown's *Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*. "From hence," he says, "is commonly assigned the reason why the Romans punished parricides by drowning them in a sack with a viper." (TRANSL.)

† Amata, the mother of Lavinia, who wished to marry her daughter to Turnus instead of to Æneas. See Virgil's *Æneid*, book xii. (TRANSL.)

the progress to Italy of the divine and most happy Henry*."

I do not know what valid excuse I can make for Dante's urging a foreign prince to march against his native city: let us lament it and pass on.

The source of the Arno being near Porciano, which belonged to the Counts Guidi, the author of the Veltro conjectures that a tradition current in these districts may be referred to this time; which is, that Dante was detained in the great Tower of Porciano. "The peasant belonging to any of the neighbouring places, on being questioned, always answers that Dante was confined here; a recent inscription at the foot of the tower attests this ancient tradition, assigning to the fact an impossible cause, the battle of Campaldino†." The same author supposes that the Counts Guidi imprisoned the imprudent poet, either to avenge his attacks against their kindred in the Inferno, or because, though Ghibellines, they did not venture to sanction this premature appeal to Henry, who was still at a distance. And this conjecture appears to me to be confirmed by the indefinite date, *In Tuscany at the founts of the Arno*, which points out an uncertain and secret residence. Some however read this date *In Toscanella by the founts of Martha*, which reading does not appear to us correct. It is not a question however of any importance ‡.

* Witte, *Dantis Epis.* vi. p. 27, etc.

† Veltro, p. 123.

‡ *Noti de Romanis, alla Vita di Dante*; Ediz. Min. tom. v. p. 118.

But Henry's lingering in Lombardy, to subdue the rebellious cities there, and the respite thus given to Florence, which was at that time ill prepared for his reception, is brought forward not only by Dante and his biographers, but by the contemporary Florentine historians, as the cause of the Emperor's ill success when he at last came southwards. In wars against entire populations towns must not be neglected, as fortresses may be passed by in wars in which armies are alone engaged. In our own days this was experienced by Napoleon in Spain. And certainly these rough but not inexperienced German warriors of Henry VII. acted prudently in refusing, at the demand of exiles, to proceed incautiously southwards in the peninsula, leaving in their rear Lodi, Cremona, Crema, and Brescia, which cities were in revolt.

At any rate Henry, after having passed Easter in Pavia, left it on the 17th of April, 1311, the day after the date of Dante's letter, and put down all the lesser insurrections, not without some trouble, nor without being obliged to inflict punishments, from which he had hitherto abstained, but at least without having had recourse to arms. But against Brescia he was obliged to take the field, and to come to open war. This war began in May, lasted four months, and became very fierce. In one sally Brusato, the chief of the Guelfs, and at that time of the city, was taken prisoner; he was a man of valour, but as his restoration to the city had been owing to Henry, who had

forced the Ghibellines to receive him*, his conduct now in opposing the Emperor was considered gross ingratitude, and he was torn to pieces in the German camp. The besieged replied by reciprocal cruelties. So it went on, the Germans insisting upon the rights of the Empire, the Italians on those of liberty; and they each considered them equally indisputable, the Germans accusing the Italians of treason, the Italians the Germans of oppression. Fortunately the three Cardinal Legates interfered. These were in the suite of the King of the Romans, in order that they might crown him when he reached Rome. Through their intervention the town surrendered, on the 24th of September, and received no other punishment except the razing of its walls and a fine in money. In it as usual Henry placed a Vicar, who is said by some to have been Giberto da Correggio, and by others Moroello Malaspina†. If the last, it could not have been Moroello the uncle, the powerful Guelf and friend of the Florentines, but Moroello the nephew, Dante's friend, and probably a Ghibelline. In the neighbouring Verona, a little before or a little after this time, the same title

* Henry made no exclusive professions or any distinction of party, but admitted chiefs of every faction into his council; he promised his favour and protection to all. . . . The Guelfs and Ghibellines mutually complained of his partiality, while calmer people gave him credit for his even justice; but the Guelfs in consequence held back, and the Emperor must have soon discovered that the opposite faction were his only real adherents, as having everything to hope and nothing to fear from his protection.—Napier's *Florentine History*, vol. i. pp. 415, 417. (TRANSL.)

† Murat. Ann. 1811. Gerini.

was given to Cane della Scala; by the early death of his brother Alboin, he remained the sole lord of that state, and became afterwards the chief of the Ghibellines of Lombardy; he was a great and most generous prince, at whose court we shall find, along with others, our distinguished exile.

From Brescia, by Cremona, Piacenza, Pavia, and Tortona, Henry arrived at Genoa in November, on his way to Tuscany, whither Robert, King of Naples, was sending his emissaries and stirring up the cities. Bologna and Florence prepared openly for hostilities, and Sienna temporized. It was now that Florence took the most prominent part. It is impossible not to admire in these transactions the constancy, boldness, or, if we like to give it that name, the pride of the Florentines. Though numerous embassies were sent to Henry to Lausanne and Milan, Florence never sent one. And to the first embassy which the Emperor sent to her, Betto Brunelleschi replied, on the part of the magistracy (*Signoria*), that the Florentines never bowed their heads to any master*. Henry sent a second embassy to them from Tortona, an account of which is given by the Bishop of Butrinto, who belonged to it, but it was not even allowed to enter the city. Notwithstanding, even as early as the 26th of April, Florence recalled some of her exiles; and on the 6th of September it appears she proclaimed a second amnesty†, but an amnesty of that sort which is rendered

* Dino Com. p. 165. Villani, p. 443.

† Villani, p. 452.

vain by its numerous exceptions. Four hundred and twenty-nine persons or families were excepted, and among these was included Dante*. In our more advanced state of civilization we should have admired the Florentines more, had they admitted the exiles, whom the good Emperor wished everywhere to restore to their native cities, and had only excluded his Vicars, by whose admission he infringed the treaty of Constance and the rights yielded by so many emperors, or bought by the blood of their ancestors; but at any rate it was only owing to this resistance of Florence, that a government so contrary to treaties and to their ancient liberty was not quietly established throughout all the Italian cities; Florence was on this occasion the citadel of Italy. We will not allow our judgement to be dazzled by Dante's glory,—he undoubtedly then belonged to the less glorious side. And great as he was, and dear as he is to us, how much more would he have been, if, instead of those Hymns to the Eagle and others of the same description which we find in his *Divina Commedia*, he had employed the magic powers of his verse in immortalising the firm, noble, yet little known resistance of his native country to foreign rule.

Henry's ambassadors, who were not able to enter either Florence or Bologna, were at first received in the castles of the Counts Guidi, and afterwards by other nobles who had not so openly declared themselves Ghibellines. These

* Veltro, p. 126.

ambassadors everywhere cited the lords in person, and the cities by their syndics or commissaries, to appear before the King of the Romans. The more timid petitioned to await his arrival at Pisa before they appeared before him, but the greatest proportion met him at Genoa, and among these was Uguccione della Faggiola*. Thither undoubtedly proceeded many of the exiles who had been excepted from the amnesty. Dante spent part of the year 1311 at Forli, according to Pelegrino Calvi, who is said to have copied a letter of his, written in the name of the Florentine exiles, to Cane della Scala, in which the want of success Henry's ambassadors met with from the Florentines is related†. From Forli it seems that Dante went, with Uguccione and the other exiles, to Genoa. But the Genoese had been censured by him towards the end of the *Inferno*, where he redoubles his invectives against the cities of Italy; and among the Genoese, Branca Doria, now very powerful and almost lord of Genoa, had been especially vilified by an invention perhaps the most horrible that had ever been created by Dante's ire. The Poet places Branca while he is yet alive and great in the deepest abyss of hell, the *Ptolomæa*‡, among those who had been traitors to their own

* Ep. Butr. pp. 908-911. Veltro.

† Veltro, p. 125.

‡ The *Ptolomæa* takes its name from Ptolomæus, who had abundance of silver and gold and made a great banquet for his father-in-law, Simon the high-priest, and his two sons; and when Simon and his sons had drunk largely, "treacherously slew them in the banqueting-place." 1 Maccab. xvi. 11. (TRANSL.)

kindred, for having, it was said, murdered his own father-in-law, Michael Zanche ; while in Branca's living body a demon is supposed to have taken up his abode. Dante thus replies to another sinner, a friar, Alberigo of Faenza, who had named Doria to him :—

Then I : "Thou fain would'st dupe me, as I guess,
For Branca d'Oria surely is not dead,
But eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and dons his dress."
"Ere to the trench above of Malebranche,
Where always boils the adhesive pitch," he said,
"Had yet arrived the hapless Michael Zanche,
This d'Oria's form the devil did assume ;
His kinsman too—leagued in the treacherous plot—
Shared also in his miserable doom."

Ah, Genoese, of honesty devoid !
So base your city, so replete with guile,
Why are ye not at one fell swoop destroy'd ?
For with Romagna's spirit most accurst*,
A countryman of yours I found—so vile,
That in Cocytus is his soul immersed,
Though bodily he lives on earth the while.

Inferno, c. 33, v. 139–147 ; v. 151–157.

In pardoning these attacks this great city would have shown more greatness of mind ; for it is said that Branca Doria and some other Genoese, exasperated by these invectives, avenged themselves by serious outrages on the satiric Poet during his residence in their city. If this was the case, it must have been at this time, when he

* Alberigo of Faenza, one of the jovial friars, who treacherously murdered two of his kindred.

visited Genoa with his old friend Ugucione and the other exiles*.

In the meanwhile the preparations for war made by King Robert and the Tuscans rekindled the revolts in Lombardy, which had been only half suppressed†. While Henry was at Genoa or Pisa, at which last city he arrived by sea on the 6th of March, 1312, Casale, Asti, Parma, Pavia, Novara, Vercelli, Reggio, Cremona, and Padua, all rebelled against the Vicars who had been set over them, or attacked the exiles who had been introduced into their walls by force. Nor on that account did Henry delay his journey to Rome. The principal object the Emperors had in these journeys was to assume the royal crown at Milan and the imperial one at Rome. It had become a vain object, for so many rebellions had degraded these two crowns; and however difficult it was sometimes to obtain them, it was always still more difficult to make the possession of them of any avail. Henry left Pisa and, passing through Viterbo, reached Rome on the 7th of May. Here King Robert began to offer open resistance to him, having endeavoured with his troops to prevent him passing the Ponte Molle, and holding possession of part of the city, even the Vatican itself. Henry caused himself therefore to be crowned in the Lateran by the Pope's legates, the Pope being secretly the friend of Robert. All this complication of circumstances is de-

* Veltro, p. 130. Arrivab. tom. i. p. 408.

† Mur. Ann. 1311, 1312. Ep. Butr. p. 907.

scribed in a lively manner by the Bishop of Butrinto. Henry's coronation took place on the 29th of June, 1312, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul; and on the same day he betrothed one of his daughters to Peter of Arragon, the son of Frederick, King of Sicily. But the warfare both in the city and in its outskirts was so much to the disadvantage of the new Emperor, that on the 20th of July he retired to Tivoli.

At last, in August, yielding to the entreaties and hopes of the Florentine exiles, he advanced into Tuscany. He arrived at Arczzo, which had always been Ghibelline, and thus friendly to him; for the vision that the Emperor had indulged of being the friend of all parties had now entirely vanished. From thence he entered into the Florentine territories, and took Montevarchi, San Giovanni, and Figline: he met at Ancisa the army of Florence, repulsed it, and on the 19th encamped before the city. The Germans and their Italian and Tuscan allies, encouraged and led on by the banished citizens, laid waste the beautiful district surrounding Florence. The Florentines, though stronger in numbers, did not sally forth, but held out steadily, and that was sufficient. Having remained there three months the Emperor retired to San Casciano on the 31st October, and on the 6th January to Poggibonsi, where he stopped to rebuild a fortress, which he named Castello Imperiale; on the 6th March he withdrew to Pisa, where, having abandoned all hopes of subduing Florence, he turned his arms, as if

he had been a petty Italian prince; against the territory and fortresses of Lucca. Thus Florence by her firmness, which is the least dazzling but the most useful of political virtues, had perhaps been the means of saving Italy from returning to her ancient subjection*.

But before proceeding further I must do justice to Dante. It often happens that a State may be pursuing the right and just path in its general politics, and yet may commit great personal injustice. Dante's first condemnation was unjust; and it was not firmness, but obstinacy, which prevented the Republic from granting his prayers, when he first entreated that he might be restored to his country. Hence arose his generous and just indignation, but an indignation which perhaps exceeded its proper bounds in the violence of its expression. This subjected him to fresh injustice—first, in the confirmation of his sentence of exile, and secondly in his exclusion from the amnesty. But Dante, though he gave himself free license in language, went no further, and did not take up arms against his country. Of this he himself boasted, and with reason; and Leonardo Aretino mentions the fact. Leonardo, after having spoken of Dante's attempts to be restored to his country by conciliatory measures, says: "While he was hoping to receive pardon, and thus to return, Henry of Luxemburg was elected Emperor. Hopes of some great political change were awakened throughout the whole

* Murat. Ann. an. 1812, 1813. Veltro, p. 181.

of Italy, first by this election, and afterwards by Henry's crossing the Alps; and Dante could not persevere in his resolution of awaiting his restoration as a favour; but rousing himself in a haughty spirit, he began to revile those who ruled the city, calling them wicked villains, and threatening them with just vengeance from the power of the Emperor, from whom he said it was evident that they could not escape. Notwithstanding this he held his country in such reverence, that, when the Emperor advanced against Florence, and encamped close to her gates, Dante could not bear to be there, according as he himself writes, although he had encouraged Henry to come*." And we may still further conjecture that Dante's noble soul was not less generous than those of some exiles of our own days, and that he perhaps rejoiced, and at least prided himself, in the glory of his ungrateful country, of that country which had the folly to reject her greatest citizen.

The Emperor, whose virtue and valour were of so little avail, soon after his discomfitures at Rome and Florence closed his stay in Italy with his life. While he was at Pisa, or rather earlier, he sent Ugucione della Faggiola as his Vicar to Genoa, for even the powerful Genoa submitted to receive a Vicar. It seems that Ugucione had accompanied him during this year, and he certainly was at the siege of Florence†. In Pisa Henry placed Francesco Ubaldini in the same office.

* Leon. Aret., p. 58.

† Veltro, p. 132.

Francesco belonged to the family of the Archbishop Ruggieri, and was the friend of Uguccione. The Emperor, pursuing his system of impartiality—an impartiality very meritorious in those times—withdrawn Guelfuccio from his long captivity, and restored Matteo della Gherardesca to his country; both were grandsons of Count Ugolino. He then prepared to oppose Robert King of Apulia, whom he had declared the enemy of the Empire, and whom Florence and Lucca had chosen as their lord for five years. Frederick of Arragon assisted the Emperor with a naval armament, and the Ghibellines lent him some assistance, but it was but small, as they were all hard pressed by their Guelf neighbours. So on the 5th of August Henry set forth, and proceeded through the Tuscan Maremma as far as Buonconvento, near Sienna. There, on the 24th of the same month, he died of the disease which usually attends northern armies, and which had already cut off many of his men; he had been suffering from it for some time, and it was probably augmented by the pestilential air of those marshes. His death was attributed to poison, as if there were no other causes for sickness and death. His body was borne through the desert Maremma by the sorrowing and dismayed Ghibellines, and was carried to Pisa*. Frederick King of Sicily arriving at that city by sea, the Pisans offered him the lordship of it; but he

* Henry of Luxemburg's tomb is in the Campo Santo of Pisa.
(TRANSL.)

shrunk from the honour, and they therefore bestowed it on Uguccione*, who made Pisa for a time the centre of his operations while he was rising to higher fortunes.

We have no trace of Dante since we left him at Genoa, but he probably accompanied the Emperor on his first visit to Pisa, and he remained there, or with the Malaspini in the Lunigiana, while Henry passed successively to Rome, the neighbourhood of Florence, Pisa, and Buonconvento. At Pisa Dante might have become acquainted with Frederick of Arragon, to whom he first intended to dedicate the third part of his great Poem; but that sovereign's too prudent rejection of the lordship of Pisa, and thus of the position of leader of the Tuscan Ghibellines, must have excited Dante's scorn, and he may on that account have deprived him of the honour of a dedication, and was also perhaps induced to use those invectives against Frederick which we find in the *Commedia*. Dante, on the other hand, wept for the early end of the good Henry of Luxemburg; and after the lapse of two centuries his grief on this occasion has been represented in a picture of Lucas of Leyden's†. In his later writings he bears these events religiously in mind. In the seventeenth canto of the *Paradiso*, speaking incidentally of the years preceding 1312 and 1313, he refers thus to them—

“But before the Gascon deceived the mighty Henry.”

Paradiso, c. 17, v. 82.

* Villani, pp. 468–470.

† Veltro, p. 136.

Thus censuring in strong terms the double dealings of Clement V. The Poet, who imagines his ascent to Paradise to take place in the year 1300, not being able to place at that time in its *empyreum*, or highest region, the soul of his favourite Emperor, because Henry lived on earth so many years after that date, prepares for him a separate throne, and makes Beatrice point it out, thus taking an opportunity of lashing Clement and praising Henry.

See the vast number of these snow-white dresses !
 See how extensive is our city—see
 Our benches are so nearly occupied
 That few new comers may admitted be.
 In that great seat whereon the lofty crown
 Holds in attracted gaze thy wondering eye,
 Ere to this marriage supper thou sit down,
 Shall be enthroned imperial Henry, who
 Will come to re-establish Italy,
But ill-disposed for regulations new.
 The blind desire that constitutes your curse
 Hath made you like the infant babe, who dies
 Of hunger, and yet drives away the nurse ;
 And such a pontiff then your Church shall sway,
 That he by open arms and subtleties
 The efforts of great Henry shall gainsay.
 But from his holy office soon shall God
 Expel, and drive him down to that foul place
 Where Simon Magus hath his curst abode—
 To depth profounder thrusting Boniface.

Paradiso, c. 30, v. 128-148.

Dante was not, as we see, ignorant of the general

aversion of the Italians to the Emperor, which he compares to that of a child driving away its nurse. But the comparison was even more complete than the Poet intended. Italy was completely weaned from the Emperors, nor was she ever again better disposed to receive them. When, two centuries later, Charles V. acquired great power in that peninsula, he possessed it less as Emperor than as the sovereign of powerful states within her frontiers.

Another tribute of veneration which Dante paid to Henry was the book he wrote called the *Monarchia*, which he had then begun, and had intended to dedicate to him. As it was not finished at the time of Henry's death, he dedicated it to Louis of Bavaria, one of the two emperors who, after fourteen months of interregnum, were elected to succeed him, the other being Frederick, the son of Albert of Austria. But as the book must have been at this time considerably advanced, and particularly refers to Dante's opinions concerning this period, we shall here give a brief account of it, as we have already done of his other works.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MONARCHIA.

ABOUT 1314.

There, 'neath the shade his sacred pinions* cast,
 Passing from hand to hand, the world he sway'd.

Paradiso, c. 6, v. 7, 8.

I WISH it were possible for me to insert here the whole book of the *Monarchia*, and that my readers would have patience to read it; for it would alone be sufficient to convince them of the strange aberrations which belonged to the spirit of Ghibellinism, and how much a lofty mind may be carried away by a false assumption; and how Dante, being thus carried away, was yet checked by his native moderation, or rather by the associations and habits of his youth, and as it were by his Guelfic blood and spirit†. The *Monarchia* is far from being one of

* The Eagle.

† I have followed the quarto edition of Venice, 1738, in which the *Monarchia* is at the end of the fourth volume, with its pages separately numbered, and with two copper-plates. The first represents the Imperial

his finest works, but it is the most important of them all as regards general history. An exposition of the opinions of the Ghibellines, made by one who was moderate in comparison with the rest of them, shows us the least extravagant views of that party; and, given to us by Dante, shows them to us in their best light; whence, if these views appear false or mischievous, what must have been those of the most violent and ignorant of the party?

With the exception of the scholastic perplexities which belonged to the Latin of the fourteenth century, nothing can be better than the manner in which this book begins; laying down a precept which must be at all times excellent—that every author ought to strive to add to the treasure of human knowledge, and thus only to treat on subjects of utility which have not been before discussed. Another precept follows, which is more wonderful for his age, namely, that all political speculations ought to have for their object what is likely to advance the civilization of the human race; and that to promote the development of the intellectual power of the whole human race ought to be the object of civilization. Not even in our own times, in which this has been so much discussed, has it been more broadly and precisely expressed.

Monarchy enthroned with kings and crowns in chains at its feet, and the Church with the keys in its hand, upon a less elevated seat, and with an air of languor. In the other plate is the Eagle, with two beaks, planting its claws upon the globe.

But our author soon deviates from the right path. The Monarchy which he is endeavouring to promote is not that of a king over a particular people; nor does he contend for this form of government, in opposition to an aristocracy or a democracy; for these three forms he calls crooked (oblique) and incompatible with liberty. The monarchy desired by Dante is universal monarchy*. In our own days, when nations are happily constituted independently of one another, when nothing is so dear to them, nothing on earth so holy, as this nationality, if a desire for universal monarchy were expressed, it would appear to all impossible to effect and almost impious to conceive; but it was not so then. Here we have the confession of one of those who were guilty enough to desire it, and this is confirmed by the pages of history from Charlemagne to Charles V. This universal monarchy, the idea of which would in our days be both abhorred and ridiculed, was then the object, the wish, the imagined right, of the Emperors and their adherents, the Imperialists or Ghibellines.

Our author errs thus in pursuing an unattainable object, and passes from one dream to another. He divides the argument into three parts:—1st. If universal monarchy is necessary for the welfare of the human race. 2nd. If the Roman people have acquired a right to such a monarchy. 3rd. If this monarchy, that is the Empire, depends immediately from God, or whether there is

* Sec. 11, p. 19; Sec. 2, p. 6.

between it and Him some minister or vicar. He follows up this division in the three books of his work, and in the first proves the necessity of this visionary monarchy to establish what is not less visionary, universal peace. He goes on to say, because there is only one human race, and because the different kingdoms of the earth are only parts of the human race, there ought to be a whole, that is the Empire; because that is according to the intention and in the likeness of God, and in the likeness of the heavens, which are all moved by one *primum mobile*; for this Empire is to decide the disputes between princes; because a universal monarch without neighbours and without ambition, is alone capable of dispensing justice, bestowing liberty, and being a good ruler; because that which can be done by the labour of one, ought not to be done by that of many. . . . Finally, such reasons are confirmed by this experience, that since the fall of the first man until the fullness of time, that is until the birth of Christ under Augustus, this monarchy did not exist; but it did then, and has done since. But let us remark what moderates in some degree his system, and which corresponds to what we before remarked in his letter to Henry: universal monarchy does not exclude municipal laws, (we see here the Guelf and the Italian citizen), nor kingdoms, nor the customs of different climates. But the author neglects to point out how these two contrary principles may be reconciled.

The second book is perhaps still stranger than the

first. The right of the Roman people to universal empire is proved by a grand syllogism, which takes up almost the whole treatise, and runs thus:—1st. Right or *jus* is nothing else than the will of God, which means that which God wills. 2nd. It was God's will that the Roman people should possess the Empire, since it was of all people the most noble and the most virtuous; since through it He performed miracles; since public and universal good has always been its object; since that people was by nature ordained to govern; since God manifested his judgement in the struggle which took place between it and other nations for the Empire. 3rd. Therefore, the Roman people had a right to the Empire; if they had not had it, if that Empire had not been *de jure* over the whole human race, our Lord Jesus Christ, born under it, and having died by the sentence of a judge of that Empire, would not have died by the deed of the whole human race, nor consequently in expiation of the sin of our first father. We may see to what absurdities one may be carried by seeking for facts to prove a bad argument. Here the truth of a fact is proved merely by what followed it, and human redemption is allowed to be legitimate and beneficial only to the subjects of the Roman Empire. It is difficult to say whether the philosophical or religious heresy is here the greater.

We have here besides to remark another error, combined indeed with the Ghibelline spirit, but distinct from

it. Our land of Italy is the only one in the world which boasts of possessing two histories, two periods of civilization and glory—the one ancient, the other modern. From the Romans, the founders and possessors of that ancient glory, a great part of our present population is descended, whence it is natural that we should be proud of them. But such a boast to nations, as well as to individuals, is liable to two serious dangers; one of them is, lest this ancient glory should be put to shame by a degenerate posterity; the other, which is perhaps the most serious danger, is that of falling into an unseasonable imitation of manners which belong to another age; or, still more unseasonably, claiming rights which have been cancelled by time. The imitation of ancient Rome, the absurd, pedantic, and childish hopes to restore her power, were perhaps the causes which more than any other have misled the minds of the Italians, from the fall of the Empire in the fifth century until our own days. It was this that excited the Italian population against Odoacer, against Theodoric, and against the Lombards, and prevented the Roman and German races from blending into one nation. It was this which gave rise to the spurious and ill-omened restoration of the Empire, by inducing the Italians to attach themselves to Charlemagne, merely because he assumed the name of Roman Emperor, which he knew well how to use to his own advantage. Afterwards, in the times of liberty, of the Communes, and of factions, it was this that on either hand caused the extravagant notions

of both Guelfs and Ghibellines; the Guelfs of Florence, Venice, and perhaps of other inferior states, being led on by the vain hope of rivalling the destinies of ancient republican Rome; and the Ghibellines, by their other dream of universal monarchy, here not merely confessed but proclaimed by Dante. A citizen of a town which claimed a Roman origin, himself pretending to it, and delighting in the study of the old days of Rome, he allowed himself to be carried away by those great names and those past glories: we should indeed venerate them, but never attempt to revive them; for in whatever manner we might attempt it, such an attempt would be both injurious and foolish. I repeat it, dreams lead us astray from reality, and the more so as they are more attractive.

The third book treats of the immediate dependence of the universal monarchy or Roman Empire on God, and of its independence of the Pope. Our author begins by assuming as a principle that God does not will that which is repugnant to the intentions of nature; he says further, that the Roman Pontiffs have three sorts of adversaries,—the Greeks from their zeal, the partizans of the Church (that is the Guelfs) from their cupidity, and the Decretalists*. Then he goes on to combat those arguments that are contrary to his propositions, which are these:—

* The *decretales* are the decrees of the Pope, and may be defined as decisions of the Popes in ecclesiastical matters of law. (Gratiani Decret. Part 1.) The Decretalists were those who collected the *decretales*. (TANFOL.)

That God made two luminaries, the greater and the lesser; that Levi was the elder brother of Judah; that Samuel raised and deposed Saul; that incense and gold were offered up by the three Magi Kings; that Christ used these words to Peter, that whatever he should bind or loose on earth should be bound or loosed in heaven; that two swords were presented to our Lord by Peter; that Constantine bestowed temporal power on the Pope; and that Pope Adrian conferred upon Charlemagne the office of advocate of the Church and the Empire. From these he passes to his positive proofs, which are:—That the Empire existed before the Church; that the Church possesses no authority over the Empire from God, nor from herself, nor from mankind in general, nor from the rulers of the earth; and that such attributes are contrary to the attributes of the Church; whence he concludes that the Empire, not depending on God's vicar, and *à fortiori* not on any one else, depends immediately on God. But he concludes with these words:—"Which truth, derived from the last question, ought not however to be taken so strictly, that the Roman Prince should not submit in some degree to the Roman Pontiff; this mortal felicity being in a certain manner designed for immortal felicity. Let Cæsar then act towards Peter with that reverence which becomes an eldest son to his father, in order that, being illuminated by the light of paternal grace, he may more powerfully enlighten the orb of the earth, over which he is placed by Him alone

who is the Governor of all things spiritual and temporal."

This third part of Dante's work, which enters into the great dispute between the supremacy of the temporal and spiritual powers, is that which occasioned, as we shall see further on, the condemnatory sentence pronounced not merely against this book, but against Dante's memory and mortal remains; it was this, at a later period, that brought down fresh ecclesiastical censures upon this work, and upon his letter to the Emperor Henry. Perhaps a proposition against the Decretalists, which appears to be directed against tradition in general, seemed the most dangerous of all. But we have to do with Dante's political heresies, not with his religious ones.

We must here however renew our protestations against those attempts to make Dante the precursor, as it were, of those Reformers who two centuries later destroyed the unity of the Catholic Church. Dante, who so delighted in unity that he wished vainly to extend it to human as well as divine things,—Dante, whose adherence to the Roman Church, and especially to the Roman See, we perceive in the passage we have just quoted,—Dante, who calls the Pope the true key-bearer of heaven, and who, while he violently attacks one Pope after another in his *Commedia*, at the same time always declares his reverence for the keys of St. Peter. Let us then leave off attributing to Dante exaggerations into which he

never fell. That the Ghibelline spirit led Germany on step by step to the spirit of the Reformation, I know to be now the opinion of several of the German historians* and I willingly acquiesce in it. But that Dante foresaw, or desired this, or, desiring it, promoted it, or even *without* desiring promoted it, I deny; and I found my opinion even on those passages of Dante's works which are most hostile to the Popes; these, understood in their true meaning, do indeed desire a restoration of discipline, which had again been much relaxed; but a reform similar to what Gregory VII. effected against the Simonists, or like that guided by Providence, and effected by the united heads of the Church in its last Council, and not by a reformation, or an outrage against the bride of Christ, whom no one venerated more than Dante.

Let my readers also pardon me if I recall to their minds two great facts of importance, from Charlemagne downwards; that the Emperors were in part elected and crowned by the Popes, and that the election of the Popes was partly confirmed by the Emperors. From these two facts, two different, or rather opposite claims were derived; the Guelfs not only contending for the independence of the Popes, but more or less for the Emperor's dependence on the Popes; and the violent Ghibellines contending not only for the independence of the Emperors, but for the dependence of the Popes on the Emperors. This last is proved by the many Popes who

* Principally Frederick Schlegel.

were either deposed or threatened with deposition. Now we have here seen, that if Dante was sufficiently a Ghibelline to maintain the independence of the Emperors, he did not wish for the dependence of the Popes ; so, if we allow him to be a Ghibelline, and even a warm one, we must still acknowledge that he did not belong to the most violent of that party. Besides, in the history of factions, three things are to be always distinguished ; whether a man is said to belong to a party, or really belongs to it, or professes himself to belong to it. Dante was perhaps called a Ghibelline before he was one ; he was one at last, and too much so ; but he never believed himself to be one, and he professed *not* be one, as we shall see in due time.

CHAPTER XII.

PISA.—LUCCA.—THE PURGATORIO.

AUGUST, 1313—NOVEMBER, 1314.

Wake into life the deaden'd notes again,
O ye most holy Nine! since yours I am.

Purgatorio, c. 1, v. 7, 8.

BUT let us leave Dante the wavering politician—a waverer, not from low motives, but from passion—and let us turn to Dante the courageous exile, the sublime poet, the man whom adversity rendered more haughty. We return to him at Pisa, where we left him; there he probably completed or wrote a great part of the *Monarchia* and *Purgatorio* under the protection of Uguccone della Faggiola, who held the lordship of that city after it had been so meanly rejected by the King of Sicily. Pisa, governed by Uguccone, had, since the death of Henry, become the chief Ghibelline city, and showed the same courage which was a short time before displayed by Florence at the head of the Guelf party. It stood alone

in northern Italy against Pope Clement V., Robert, King of Apulia, Florence, Lucca, and Sienna; but while Ugucione was taking defensive measures, by negotiations and hostile preparations, fortunately for the Ghibellines one of their principal enemies, Clement V., died, on the 10th of April, 1314*.

Clement had already filled the Sacred College with French Cardinals. There were only four Italians to be found at the Conclave, which was held under fatal auspices at Carpentras in Provence: these were Niccolò da Prato, who had been sent by Pope Benedict to the Tuscans in order to establish peace, but had had so little success; Napolcon Orsini, who performed the same office with no better success for Pope Clement; Francesco Gaetani, a relation of Pope Boniface; and Pietro Colonna, whose family was so inimical to that Pontiff. It was to these, and perhaps to a few other Italian Cardinals, that Dante wrote a letter, exhorting them to elect an Italian Pope; he wrote it probably from his retreat at Pisa. It is fortunate that this letter is preserved to us, for it seems to complete our notion of his opinions. As we have seen by his preceding letter, his great poem, and the *Monarchia*, that he longed for the Emperor to come to Rome, so we see here that he also desired, and endeavoured to bring about, the return of the Pope to that city. Now it is certain that this would not have been the wish of a violent Ghibelline; for although the

* Veltro, p. 137.

Popes had not latterly been the real heads of the Guelf party, they certainly took a principal part in it, and their return must have undoubtedly strengthened that party. We see in Dante's impartial desire for both the Emperor and the Pope, that he considered them the legitimate rulers of the Italian nation.

His letter on the present occasion, though it has reached us in a mutilated and imperfect condition, is more free of those generalities and those far-fetched examples which make his other letters depart so widely from the practical style of diplomacy, as well as from his own noble manner of writing. He begins with an invective against the cupidity of the ecclesiastics of his day, and also against their studies, as different from those of St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Dionysius, Damascenus, and Bede; he makes one exception, Gherardino Malaspina, Bishop of Luni, who, like the rest of that noble family, must have been certainly Dante's friend. He then apologizes for opening his mouth upon such scandals, he a simple follower of Christ: "Am I made loquacious? you have forced me to it; and you should be ashamed to be admonished from so low a quarter, and not from Heaven. . . . Keep before your eyes the image of Rome, thus deprived of her two luminaries, sitting alone, and a widow; and this above all concerns ye, who knew the sacred Tiber in your tender years. For although that capital of the Latin people should be loved by all Italians, as the common origin of

their civilisation, ye ought especially to venerate her, as from her ye derived your being; and if her present misery overwhelms the other Italians with sorrow and blushes, how much more ought ye to sorrow and blush, who were the cause of her sinking into obscurity and being partially eclipsed."

He then turns his reproaches especially against Orsini, and another whom he designates as being at the head of the Trastevere faction, and by whom he probably meant Colonna, and he concludes thus:—"But ye may make some amends for this, (not that the wound inflicted on the apostolic throne which has power over heaven and earth will ever entirely be effaced,) if ye, that were the authors of such enormities, will now fight boldly for the bride of Christ, for the throne of the bride, that is Rome, for our Italy, or, to speak more fully, for the city of all the pilgrims on earth; when from the arena where ye now contend, and where ye are gazed upon by all the surrounding nations, even to the shores of the ocean, ye may hear the shout of *Gloria in excelsis* if ye offer up yourselves to glory; and thus the shame of the Gascons, so greedy of gain and so eager to usurp the glory of the Latins, may become an example to posterity throughout all ages*."

The date of this letter is missing, and it is impossible to ascertain with any accuracy the exact time when it was written, for the Apostolic See was vacant for two years,

* *Antologia*, tom. 23, No. 69, p. 57. Witte, *Ep. vii.* p. 48.

and the election hanging on. We must suppose however that it was written during the first months of this inter-regnum, for it was not long before the weakness of the Italian Cardinals became manifest; they were attacked in Carpentras by the relations of the late Pope, and by those who favoured the election of a Frenchman as his successor. The Italian Cardinals deserved Dante's reproaches, as we may see by a letter addressed by Orsini to Philip le Bel, in which he confesses their errors; but their repentance was too late. The Conclave of Cardinals, mostly composed of Frenchmen and all prisoners in France, elected a French Pope*.

Uguccione in the meanwhile, frustrated in his negotiations, took up arms against the nearest of his numerous enemies, and annoyed Lucca to such a degree, that he obliged her to make peace with Pisa, to restore the castles which had been given up to her twenty-five years before by Count Ugolino, and to re-admit into her walls her Ghibelline exiles. Among these exiles was Castruccio Castracani, who was then almost the pupil, and who became afterwards the successor of Uguccione. The re-admission of the adverse exiles was the usual manner in which a party acknowledged itself to be vanquished; and, as usual, the party thus re-admitted soon expelled the opposite side. This caused fighting in Lucca, on the 14th of June, 1314. Uguccione and the Pisans entered,

* See the portrait of Clement V. drawn by Muratori, *Ann.* 1314, pp. 77-79.

and expelled King Robert's Vicar and the Guelfs, and allowed the city to be sacked during eight days. It contained treasure that Pope Clement had caused to be brought there from Rome. Thus Lucca was governed by Pisa, and both Lucca and Pisa by Ugucione. He made one of his sons, Francesco della Faggiola, Podestà of Lucca; while another, Neri della Faggiola, made himself master of Borgo San Sepolcro. The difficulties of the Ghibellines gave greatness to the family of Ugucione; for, though he was a mere soldier of fortune, they gave themselves up to his control for want of more powerful and dignified leaders*.

And under the protection of his friend, Dante could now have entered Lucca in safety, although he had attacked her so violently in his *Inferno* †. He could not have entered it before, for Lucca had been the fierce enemy of Henry VII., the Ghibellines and the Bianchi. But having entered it, and resided there, Dante found reason to alter his opinion of that city, and to contradict the attack he had made on Lucca, at least, among the many Italian cities against which he had thundered in his *Inferno*. Shortly after, or perhaps precisely about the close of the year 1314, he ended the *Purgatorio*, in which he introduces that Buonaggiunta of Lucca ‡ of whom we have already spoken, and causes him to be pointed out with several others, by his (Dante's) friend Forese:—

* Mur. Ann. 1314. Veltro, p. 188.

† *Inferno*, c. 21, v. 38–42.

‡ Buonaggiunta was a poet of Lucca.

"This," pointing with his finger to a shade,
 "Is Buonaggiunta the Lucchese."

But as a man who marks, and learns to prize
 One more than other,—him of Lucca so
 I mark'd, who kenn'd me with most earnest eyes.
 Some words he mutter'd, and I heard the name
 'Gentucca' hoarsely murmur'd from that place,
 By Justice parch'd with such a torturing flame*.
 "Spirit," I said, "who seem'st so freely bent
 On sweet communion, let our minds embrace,
 And each from other reap the soul's content."
 He answer'd, "She is born, who, though still loose
 Her tresses be†, my city shall endear,
 However some may load it with abuse.
 Depart thou then with this prophetic strain;
 And if my murmuring should confuse thine ear,
 The events themselves will make its meaning plain."

Purgatorio, c. 24, v. 19, 20; v. 34-48.

Nothing is known of this Gentucca; we will not enter into a discussion of how much she had been loved by Dante, and how far he had again been faithless to the memory of Beatrice. Let us pass over in silence the consolations or errors of the poor exile.

* The murmur came from the parched throat of Buonaggiunta, who was among the sinners expiating gluttony by constant hunger. Gentucca seems to have been a noble and beautiful maiden of Lucca, with whom Dante afterwards fell in love during his exile. We must remember the date of his visit to Purgatory is supposed to be in 1300, two years before his exile. (Wright.)

† Dante's curiosity is excited, and he endeavours to prevail upon Buonaggiunta to gratify it; but he is content to inform him shortly that this Gentucca is born, who, though not yet grown up, shall endear

In this same year, 1314, on the 29th of November, died another of Dante's great adversaries, Philip le Bel, King of France. We find Philip mentioned as a living personage in the last canto of the *Purgatorio*, and we are thus better able to ascertain its date, than of any other part of the *Commedia*; for the twenty-fourth canto, in which Lucca is mentioned, could not have been written earlier than June, and the thirty-third or last canto could not have been written later than November, 1314. Thus within six months he must have written at least ten cantos. The invectives against the Emperor Albert, which we find in the sixth canto, appear to have been written before his successor visited Italy in 1310. It would seem then that the composition of the *Purgatorio* must have taken up five years, from 1310 to 1314, or even six years. It is probable, I think, that he began it in 1309, during his quiet residence at Paris; that he continued it during 1310 amid his first hopes of Henry's visit, and then paused; that he resumed it with fresh zeal after that Emperor's death, and finished it during the last months of 1314.

The *Purgatorio* is often not read, or very negligently, by many who profess themselves to be Dante's admirers, from having read *Francesca*, or *Ugolino*, or at most the whole *Inferno*; but the *Purgatorio*, taking it altogether,

to him the city of Lucca, however infamous for its peculators. Cary translates the forty-third verse more literally by "*Woman is born, whose brow no wimple shades yet.*" (TRANSL.)

is perhaps the most beautiful part of the *Divina Commedia*, or that at least which exemplifies the best, the most beautiful part of Dante's character, his love. The *Inferno*, which is almost entirely composed of wrath and horror, was a subject very much adapted to Dante's genius; but the great attribute of a truly poetical mind is variety, and a susceptibility to feel and express different passions,—above all, that of Love, which is our consolation here below, and will hereafter render us perfect. Dante had now issued from the gloom of the infernal abyss, into the light, and sun, and hopes of Purgatory; in his real existence he had abandoned the thoughts of his ungrateful country and her factions, and was cherishing hopes of peace and repose, as is natural to an exile treading a foreign land. Thus, in the first verses of the *Purgatorio*, he enters on a new song of love, assumes a new style, full of joy and light, which he continues with some few exceptions to the end of his poem. There are numerous beautiful episodes in the *Purgatorio*. Here Casella sings to him his (Dante's) first canzone of love; here he finds Pia, the unhappy Siennese lady, who died in the Maremma, a victim to calumny and jealousy; here is the affectionate meeting between the fellow-citizens Virgil and Sordello; here we find another friend of Dante's, the gentle judge of Gallura, Nino della Gherardesca, who speaks reproachfully against his wife, and sends advice to his daughter; the miniature painter Oderisi, and his pathetic reflections on the vanity of

glory; Forese, the friend of his youth, with his tender recollections and praises of his affectionate Nella. Besides these, there is the passage we have already quoted relating to Gentucca and Buonaggiunta, followed by an explanation of what poetry was inspired by love. Then there is his description of the terrestrial Paradise, with those charming creations, whatever they may represent, Leah and Mathilda; and last of all, and above all, those three divine cantos, when he again meets Beatrice, after the elapse of ten years, according to the fiction, and in reality written twenty-four years after her death*.

There are numerous and wonderfully varied descriptions of angels introduced here. This has been pointed out by Ginguené. The belief in angels is one of the most delightful and poetical parts of our religion, and no Christian poet has given them in so poetical a form as Dante has done. Fully to understand and appreciate this, we must search in his other works, especially in the *Vita Nuova* and *Convito*, for the whole system of his thoughts concerning these celestial creatures. Dante was of all poets, except those in Holy Writ, the furthest removed from materialism, and the most wrapt up in spiritual contemplations. He saw clearly before him the two worlds of matter and spirit reunited,—inanimate, vegetable, and animated matter, by degrees rising in dignity till it reaches man. We, being both matter

* *Purgatorio*, Cantos 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 23, 24, 28-32.

and spirit, are, according to Dante, as it were, a link between the two worlds: above us are immaterial spirits. There is no will and no liberty in matter below us; there is will and liberty to do good or evil in us alone, who are both matter and spirit; and the pure spirits above us have will, but not liberty*. These spirits, who were wrongly worshiped under the name of gods by the ancients, are believed in by us with fear and love under the name of angels; he saw the bad angels who desire evil governing Hell, and the good, who desire what is right, governing, some the different heavens, some the actions of men, some one especial attribute, some one series of events, and some the penances of Purgatory, which are sweetened by hope†. We have seen that an angel had appeared to Dante, to open to him the gates of Dis in Hell—an angel, swift, silent, and terrible; but perhaps the clearest explanation of Dante's notions on this subject, is his beautiful description of Fortune in the Inferno, who had been formerly considered as a goddess, and now by him as an angel.

He, whose transcendent wisdom hath no bound,
Fashion'd the heavens, and gave to them a guide;
Distributing an equal light around,
So that each part to other part might shine;
And thus, o'er earthly splendours to preside,
A ministering power did he assign,

* *Monarchia*.† *Convito*, *Trat. II.*

To deal life's fleeting goods with varying hand ;
 And, spite the impediments of human skill,
 To change from race to race, from land to land :
 Hence is it that the nations fall or rise,
 Obedient to her all-controlling will,
 Who, like a snake, conceal'd in herbage lies.
 In vain 'gainst her your earthly wisdom vies ;
 With foresight and with judgement she maintains
 Her destined sway, like other Deities*.
 Her changes have no rest—for ever new :
 To speed her on, Necessity constrains ;
 And hence vicissitudes so oft ensue.
 And she it is on whose devoted head
 Are heap'd such vile reproach and calumny,
 By those whose praise she rather merited.
 But she is blest and hears not what they say ;
 With other primal beings, joyously
 She rolls her sphere, exulting on her way.

Inferno, c. 7, v. 73-96.

Even in the beginning of the Purgatorio we find an angel upon a vessel using his spread wings as sails, and guiding Souls through the ocean to the skirts of the Island Mountain of Purgatory. Another angel is placed at the blessed gate of Purgatory: one on each of the flights of Steps on which the spirits ascend from one ledge to another; each of these are differently clothed, and speak and act in a distinct manner. The virtues that surround the car of Beatrice are angels, and so are the pious "substances" (*sustanzie pie*) who form her

* The other gods of the ancients, who are here considered angels.

chorus, who intercede for Dante when she blames him, and to whom she addresses her words.

The machinery of the Purgatorio is perhaps more beautiful than that of the Inferno; it is certainly more original and more entirely his own. The Island Mountain of Purgatory is situated in the same meridian, but at the antipodes of Jerusalem. The poets having ascended the rocky abyss of Hell, find (a strange but beautiful fancy) Cato of Utica at the foot of the mountain, on the shore where the Souls disembark*; from thence they mount to a terrace, where the Spirits are all obliged to remain as long a time as they delayed repentance on earth; this delay however may be shortened, like their other sufferings, by the prayers of their survivors†. The mountain is encircled by seven rocky ledges, where by various punishments, which are alleviated in some degree by hope, are purged the seven mortal sins of Pride‡, Envy§, Anger||, Indolence¶, Avarice**, Gluttony††, and Luxury‡‡. Entering into the lowermost of these circles, that of Pride, Dante meets Souls marked on their brows with seven P's§§, one of which is erased at each ascent; and though Dante is living, he, like the rest, shares in these marks, and in the erasure of them. Having arrived at last at the uppermost circle, which contains the

* Purgatorio, c. 1-3.

† Cantos 4-9.

‡ Cantos 10-12.

§ Cantos 12-14.

|| Cantos 15-17.

¶ Cantos 17, 18.

** Cantos 19-21.

†† Cantos 22-24.

‡‡ Cantos 24-26.

§§ P, from the first letter of *Peccatum*, a sin. (TRANSL.)

luxurious, who are purified by fire, Dante loses courage ; but his desire to see Beatrice, who is on the other side of the fire, induces him to pass through these flames ; from thence he ascends to the summit of the mountain, where lies the terrestrial Paradise, with Lethe the river of Oblivion flowing through it. While he stands beside this river conversing with Mathilda, who is gathering flowers on its edge, there suddenly appears to him upon the opposite bank, in a car, the long-expected Beatrice*. Virgil then disappears, and Dante passes from a momentary regret to various emotions by turns—unbounded joy, shame at the reproaches he receives, and repentance. He is then dipped in Lethe, and having forgotten his sins, he fixes *his* eyes on *those* of Beatrice, and by this gaze she draws him after her, while she gazing on the sun, is lifted up to the stars†.

This is a wonderful composition, from the serenity, unity, and just proportion of all its parts, and from its gradually increasing in interest as it goes on, with this one exception,—that the poem, being really finished about the middle of the thirty-first canto, is uselessly prolonged for two cantos and a half, which are full of the most intricate and inextricable allegories. Much has been written upon them, and much more might yet be written ; but it would be dwelling upon what was the least comprehensible and the least beautiful part of the Com-

* Purgatorio, c. 27–29.

† Canto 30–33.

media. The whole finishes with the following prophecies made by Beatrice :—

Without an heir the eagle not for aye
 Shall be, who left his feathers in the car*,
 Whence it became a monster—then a prey :
 I see full surely—therefore I declare—
 The approach of constellations†, from all bar
 And hindrance free, bringing a season near,
 Wherein, One, stamp'd *five hundred, ten, and five*,—
 God's Angel—shall destroy the thievish dame‡;
 Her giant partner§ too of life deprive.
 And haply my narration, dark, like those
 Of Sphinx or Themis, credit may not claim,
 Since o'er the mind, like them, a cloud it throws.
 But soon this hard enigma to explain,
 The events shall be the Œdipus; nor blade
 Nor flock therefrom shall injury sustain.
 Mark thou; and over as I spend my breath,
 Be these my words to those alive convey'd
 Whose life is but a constant race to death.

Purgatorio, c. 33, v. 37–53. (Wright.)

The *five hundred, ten, and five*, is interpreted by all to mean the three letters, D, X, V, which inverted make out *Dux*, which means Captain. A Ghibelline Captain

* The eagle represents the Emperor, who had lost so much of his power and dignity. The woman who sits in a car must mean the Court of Avignon. (TRANSL.)

† The revolution alluded to signifies that one sent by God shall come, who will destroy all heresy, and all simony, and all practisers of simony. See Rev. xviii., 1, 2, 9. *Ottimo Comento*. (Wright.)

‡ The Papal Court.

§ Philip le Bel, of France.

must be here understood to menace the Roman Court and the Guelf party. But it is impossible to determine with certainty whether by this captain was meant Ugucione della Faggiola, then the principal Ghibelline leader in Tuscany, or Can della Scala, who already held that position in Lombardy, or a new Emperor, so much desired in Italy. There seems most probability that Dante intended Uguccione; but perhaps he meant no person in particular, but wished here only to hold out an indefinite menace. At any rate it does not matter to us what was Dante's meaning in these last unfortunate verses of the *Purgatorio*. His imagination, again darkened (owing perhaps to the composition of the *Monarchia*), produced in him this obscurity of images and style and these inverted letters. We condemn Dante for this, but do not let us follow the example of those who try to explain these difficulties, and thus degrade the whole of the divine Poem.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FORTUNES AND FALL OF UGUCCIONE DELLA FAG-
GIOLA.—CAN GRANDE DELLA SCALA.—DANTE AT THE
COURT OF THE LATTER.

Nov. 1314.—1318.

O the insensate labour men bestow
On worldly things!—how weak those reasonings are
Which make them stoop their wings to earth below.
One was pursuing medicine,—one a course
Of law ; the Church employ'd another's care ;
One strove to rule by sophistry or force ;
One was on wicked gains by fraud intent ;
By merchandize another ; this one given
To fleshly joys ; on ease another bent ;
When I, from all these earthly cares relieved,
With Beatrice ascending into Heaven,
Was in that sphere so gloriously received.

Paradiso, c. 11, v. 1—12.

UGUCCIONE DELLA FAGGIOLA, lord of Pisa and Lucca,
was now preparing to attack Florence, the most impor-
tant enterprise for a Ghibelline chief. The author of

the Veltro has shown how important an influence he had upon Dante's life, and we now see that he had an equally important one in the general history of Italy. We have until now seen him one of the most acting and daring of those Podestàs or Captains of the People that sought their fortune in one city after another, and that might therefore be called *magistrates of fortune*; now he will appear as one of the first among those chiefs of foreign soldiery, or rather captains of fortune, who served, and in process of time plundered and tyrannised, the cities and provinces of Italy during this and the following century, until the early part of the sixteenth. The former expeditions of Ugucione in Romagna, and while he was Podestà or Captain of Arezzo or Gubbio, were undertaken more in the character of a magistrate than a military commander; for it does not appear that he was at that time followed by adventurers more than the other Podestàs or Captains. But on the death of the Emperor Henry, and on the return of his army with his body to Pisa, it is recorded by Villani that "all the chiefs (*caporali*) and barons, who had been with the Emperor, departed and returned to their own countries. Other German, Brabant, and Flemish knights, with their companies (about a thousand horsemen), remained in the pay of the Pisans. And the Pisans, not being able to get another Captain, elected to that office Ugucione della Faggiola of Massa Tribara, who had been the Emperor's Vicar in Genoa. He came to Pisa, and having

taken its government, did great things in Tuscany with these Ultramontane warriors*.

Before this time there were certainly mercenary bands of soldiers, and even foreign ones; but, if I am not mistaken, this was one of the first and the greatest. Uguccione also was one of the first who employed these bands to hold possession of cities, and to aspire to provinces; whence he may be said to be the precursor of Hawkwood and Lodrisio Visconti, who are usually reckoned as the first of the Condottieri. Thus we owe to the visit of the Emperor Henry, if not the introduction of this scourge, at least its most cruel form.

With the assistance of these German troops†, Uguccione had already taken Lucca; with these, during the close of 1314 and the beginning of 1315, he had scoured the whole Maremma and the territories of Volterra and San Miniato, and had penetrated into those of Pistoia as far as Carmignano, and captured the castles of Cingoli, Monte Calvi, and many others‡. Being enabled by these Germans to carry all before him in Tuscany, he laid siege to Monte Catini in the Val di Nievole, a castle belonging to Lucca, which a short time before had been taken by the Florentines. "Uguccione had," says Villani, "assembled the whole forces of Pisa and Lucca,

* Villani, p. 469.

† Villani calls them a "*Masnada di Tedeschi*," *Masnada* being the name that was used before that of *Company*.

‡ Villani, lxxvii. p. 475.

and of the Bishop of Arezzo, and of the Counts of Santa Fiore, all the Tuscan Ghibellines and Florentine exiles, and as auxiliaries the Lombard followers of Messer Maffeo Visconti and his sons. The said Uguccione had horsemen to the number of two thousand five hundred and more, and a great force besides*."

The Florentines, until now, had been scarcely more than spectators of Uguccione's triumphs; but having demanded and obtained assistance from the Apulian Princes, King Robert's two brothers, Philip Prince of Taranto and Piero†, and Charles the son of the Prince of Taranto, besides many other allies, they marched to the rescue.

"There were men," continues Villani, "from Bologna, Sienna, Città di Castello, Agobbio, Romagna, Pistoia, Volterra, and Prato, and all the other Guelf towns and allies of Tuscany; and, including the followers of the Prince and Messer Piero, they numbered three thousand and two hundred horsemen, besides a very great body of foot‡." Thus even the Florentine chronicler confesses that his townsmen had the advantage in point of numbers. But the Prince of Taranto, who commanded

* Villani, p. 476.

† Piero was the youngest brother of the King of Naples: he seems to have won all hearts at Florence by his wisdom, affability, and personal graces; and so warm and general was the friendship of the Florentines, that if he had survived the war the lordship of Florence would probably have been conferred on him for life. (Napier's Florentine History.)

‡ Villani, p. 476.

them, was, according to the words of the King his brother, a man "more headstrong than wise, and not very fortunate in battle, rather the contrary." They set out from Florence on the 6th of August, 1315; and having arrived in front of Uguccione's army, they remained facing it for several days, with the bed of the Nicvole between, making attacks and skirmishes, or, as they were then called, *badalucchi*. At last Uguccione (either out of fear of Guelf succours, which were coming to the Florentines, or for the sake of a stratagem) struck his tents on the night and morning of the 28th and 29th of August, and burned the *battifolli*, that is to say, the works of circumvallation that had been formed for the siege, and drew up upon the level space (*spianata**) between the two armies, "with the intention, if the Prince and his troops did not move, to descend the valley and proceed to Pisa; and if they should wish to fight, to have the advantage of the ground, and to try the fortune of battle†." This was perceived in the morning by the Florentines and their unlucky commander, then sick of the quartain fever; and wishing to impede the retreat of Uguccione, they likewise decamped, and without any order of battle confronted the enemy, thinking that that would be sufficient to make them turn their backs. But

* As the armies in the Middle Ages consisted mainly of cavalry, very heavily armed, they could not well fight on uneven ground; and it seems that they often had the ground smoothed and levelled on purpose for battle, whence the term *spianato*. (TRANSL.)

† Villani, p. 477.

they were much deceived; for Uguccione on the contrary commenced the battle, and caused the Florentines, who guarded the level space, to be attacked by his own son, and Giani Giacotti Malaspina, a Florentine exile, with the Imperial pennon, at the head of a hundred and fifty horse. These routed the advanced guard, but arriving at the troop of Messer Piero, who was with the Florentine cavalry, they were routed in their turn; the Imperial pennon was struck down, and the two commanders slain. Then Uguccione advanced the German troops, who were more than eight hundred knights; these furiously attacking the enemy, who were not in good order nor completely armed, easily put them all to flight; they had more difficulty with the Florentine knights, but even these also were at last dispersed. There died Messer Piero, the brother of the King of Apulia; his body was never found; and there died another of the House of Anjou, Charles the son of the Prince of Taranto; and there died other great warriors belonging to all the cities of the Florentine league, and of almost all the Noble and *Popolani* houses of Florence. There were two thousand slain and five hundred prisoners, according to Villani. The Prince of Taranto fled with the remainder of the army. Monte Catini, and afterwards Monte Sommano, surrendered to Uguccione; Volterra and other cities sent in their allegiance*. The Emperor Louis of Bavaria, one of the two who had been

* Villani, pp. 477, 478.

elected to succeed Henry, granted him privileges and possessions in various places near Monte Catini, and bestowed on him, in his native district of Montefeltro, Massa Tribaria and Borgo San Sepolchro; these were held by one of Uguccone's sons, and by Castiglione of Arezzo. The Guelfs were utterly disheartened, and there remains a canzone expressive of their lamentations. Uguccone, at the pinnacle of power, appeared to be nearly accomplishing Dante's predictions*.

There is no evidence to show whether Dante was or was not at the battle of Monte Catini, with his friend and present protector Uguccone, and along with the other Florentine exiles who are recorded to have been there; perhaps his regard for his country kept him back this time, as it had done on a former occasion, when the Emperor Henry VII. besieged Florence. But that he participated in some manner in these events, and in the hopes to which they gave rise, there can be scarcely any doubt; as a memorial remains of a fourth sentence of condemnation, confirming the preceding ones, and pronounced against him in October, 1315 (so little more than a month after the battle), by Ranieri the son of Messer Zaccaria of Orvieto, King Robert's Vicar in Florence†. Perhaps the cause of this new condemnation was the Monarchia, which might have been published at this time. At any rate it was resented by the Poet in his usual manner, in the verses of the Paradiso which he

* Veltro, p. 140.

† Pelli, pp. 109, 130.

was then writing, when he causes his beloved Carlo Martello to make some stinging remarks upon the whole race of Anjou, and especially upon Robert, against whom he concludes with this bitter reflection:—

“ And did unthinking mortals upon earth
To Nature’s everlasting rules give heed,
There would be no complaint of lack of worth ;
But him most suited unto war, ye teach
His wit to sharpen in religion’s cause,
And make a king of him most fit to preach ;
Reversing Nature’s fundamental laws.”

Paradiso, c. 8, v. 142–148.

But the rising fortunes of Ugucione were a better consolation for the Poet than writing satirical verses against his enemies ; this prosperity was however of short duration. Thus passed Dante’s whole life, shared between hopes and disappointments ; and such is the usual fate of exiles.

Ugucione, rendered bold by Imperial donations, by victories, by the possession of various lordships, and perhaps more than all by foreign soldiers (the best support of tyrants), tyrannised over Pisa and Lucca. In March, 1316, instead of carrying on operations against Florence and the other Guelf cities, he seized at Pisa Banduccio Buonconte and his son Piero, men of sense and authority, who were in opposition to him ; and, accusing them of being in treaty with King Robert, had them both summarily beheaded. This excited against him the ill-will of the Pisans ; at their head were Coscetto

del Colle, a *popolano*, and Count Gaddo, one of those Gherardeschi so well known to us as the principal Guelfs of Pisa. Ranieri della Faggiola had succeeded his brother Francesco, who had been killed at Monte Catini, as Podestà of Lucca. In the beginning of April, 1316, he imprisoned and condemned to death Castruccio Castracani*, as Castruccio had ravaged certain castles in the Lunigiana, belonging to Spinetta Malaspina, a friend of the Faggiolas. Ranieri had perhaps more justice on his side than his father; but he was equally imprudent, for Castruccio was one of the principal men of Lucca, and was as much beloved by his townspeople as the Faggiolas were hated. Lucca therefore rose in arms on his side, and Ranieri sent to Pisa for assistance from his father†; in the meanwhile he defended himself so badly against the popular fury that he was obliged to fly from the city, and his prisoner was declared its lord. Uguccione, on receiving the news from Lucca, set off from Pisa; and as soon as he was gone, Coscetto del Colle roused the Pisans by the cry of *Death to Uguccione!* attacked and plundered the palace of the Podestà, and proclaimed Gaddo della Gherardesca lord of Pisa. Uguccione, half-way between the two cities, in which he had been so lately sovereign, now found himself banished from each of them, and sought refuge with his friend Spinetta Malaspina; he afterwards went to Modena, to his estates of Montefeltro, and lastly to Can della Scala at Verona,

* Muratori, Ann. 1316.

† Villani, pp. 479, 480.

who took him into his pay, as well perhaps as his companies of Germans; these last could certainly not have remained with the new Guelf lord of Pisa. Whether Dante remained at Lucca with its new lord, which is certainly possible, as Castruccio was a Ghibelline, or whether he accompanied Ugucione when he took refuge with the Malaspinas, their common friends, and followed him afterwards into Romagna, we have no information; but it is certain that somewhere about this time he found a new asylum at Verona with Can Grande della Scala*.

Can della Scala, called the Great†, was in 1316 twenty-five years old, powerful, rich, and generous. From his childhood he had been distinguished for his generosity. Benvenuto da Imola relates that, when a child, Can was led by his father Albert to his treasury, which was the principal means of strength among all these lords of fortune; Albert encouraged the boy to take what he liked, but Can showed in his childish way his contempt for these treasures. Albert died in 1301, and his eldest son and successor, Bartholommeo, in 1304. Alboin, the second son, then succeeded to the power; he is the one who is accused by Dante as wanting in nobleness of spirit. Can, the third of the brothers, was

* Veltro, pp. 150, 151.

† On Can Grande, see Ferreti. *Vicent. Hist. lib. vi. vii. Rer. It. ix. 1122.* Ejusdem, *Carmen in laudem Canis Grandis, Rer. It. ix. 1197.* *Cronica di Verona. Rer. It. tom. viii.* Girolamo della Corte, *Storia di Verona. Sagaccio Muzzio Gazzata, St. di Reggio, Rer. It. xviii. Pelli, p. 120. Arrivabene, i. 224; 1443. Mussato, Rer. It. tom. viii. Boccac. Giorn. 10, Nov. 7.*

associated with Alboin in the government about 1308. In 1311, when the Emperor Henry came to Italy, both brothers received the title and office of Imperial Vicars in Verona. But Alboin was at that time sick of a mortal complaint, and Can, then about twenty years of age, alone accompanied the expedition, which deprived the Paduans of Vicenza; Padua had been disobedient to the Emperor. Can afterwards was at the important siege of Brescia, and then at Genoa. At the death of Alboin, on the 28th of October, 1311, he returned to Verona, of which he became now the sole Lord and Vicar*. In 1312, and still more in 1313 and 1314, after Henry's death, he had to defend his late conquest Vicenza, and his envied power there, against Padua, Treviso, the Marquis of Este, and the Bishop of Feltre; Can was assisted by the Bishop of Trent, and according to circumstances by the other Ghibellines of Lombardy†. At last his own personal courage terminated this long struggle to his honour and advantage. In September, 1314, his enemies unexpectedly assembled their whole strength, and having seized and sacked Borgo San Piero, encamped before the walls of the much disputed Vicenza. Can Grande received notice of this at Verona, and with a single attendant rode with full speed to Vicenza, contrived to enter, and restored the courage of the citizens and the German garrison; he made a sudden sally on

* Muratori, Ann. 1311. Veltro, pp. 119, 120, 128. Arriv. i. 225, 226.

† Muratori, Ann. 1312-1314. Veltro, pp. 183, 186, 188.

the 17th of September, and with the unexpected war-cry of "Long live Cane!" he fell upon the Paduans, threw them into disorder and dispersed them, killing many, making many more prisoners, and pillaging the whole camp. Among the prisoners was Albertino Muscato, a very elegant Latin writer for his time, and, as was often the case in those days, uniting the qualities of a warrior, a politician, and a man of letters. He and some of the other prisoners began negotiations, from whence ensued the peace, which was signed on the 20th of October between Padua and Can Grande, in which Vicenza was given up to him, and he was confirmed in its possession*. A staunch Ghibelline, and the lord of two powerful cities, Can Grande joined with Passerino de' Bonacossi, Lord of Mantua and Modena, and Matteo Visconti, the Imperial Vicar and Lord of the principality of Milan, in forming a Ghibelline triumvirate, which, during 1315 and the following years, made war against and overpowered almost all the Guelfs of Brescia, Cremona, Padua, Treviso, and other cities. In 1317, when Louis of Bavaria and Frederick of Austria disputed the Empire, Pope John having prohibited any one to assume the title of Imperial Vicar without his express permission, Visconti resigned that title, and caused himself to be proclaimed by the people the Lord General of the city. Can, on the contrary, on the 16th of March swore fealty to Austria, and was confirmed by Frederick as

* Muratori, Ann. 1314.

his Vicar in Verona and Vicenza. At last, on the 16th of December, 1318, in the parliament held at Soncino, Can Grande was elected Captain General of the Ghibelline league in Lombardy, with a stipend of a thousand florins of gold a month*.

To this powerful and fortunate sovereign, and during the time he was engaged in these wars, came Ugguccione as captain of his forces in 1316; and about the same time Dante arrived at his court as an exile. Ugguccione left Can for a short time in 1317 for the Lunigiana; and from thence, with the aid he brought from Verona, along with that granted him by Spinetta Malaspina, he attempted to recover either Lucca or Pisa. But the citizens of these towns, who, having experienced his tyranny, feared his return to them, repulsed him so effectually, that he was obliged to return to Verona, and was soon followed thither by Malaspina. There also was Guido di Castello, who had formerly been Dante's host at Reggio, but was now expelled from it, and along with him Sagacio Muzio Gazzata, who wrote the history of those cities, and related the magnificence of the court of Verona. Here a refuge was prepared for all the exiled Ghibellines; here was also an honoured place for all those Guelfs who yielded to the power of Can Grande, or who had become his prisoners, among whom were Giacomo of Carrara, Vanni Scornazzano, and Albertino Mussato. Here, at the most splendid court of

* Muratori, Ann. 1315-1318.

Italy, were assembled warriors, authors, churchmen, poets, artists, courtiers, and minstrels. Gazzatta, who participated in this magnificence, relates how they had all distinct furnished apartments in the palace of the sovereign, with appointments and devices appropriate to each,—triumphs for the warriors, the Muses' sacred groves for the poets, Mercury for the artists, Paradise for the preachers, and Fortune for the exiles. A common table was spread for all, and they were by turns invited to the table of the sovereign. Guido da Castello, surnamed the Simple Lombard, and Dante were the oftenest invited there*.

But perhaps Dante in his present situation is more deserving than ever of our compassion; for the unfortunate may receive some consolation in solitude, if they are conscious of their innocence, and still more if they are sensible that they possess moral or intellectual greatness; but it is difficult to keep up this self-respect in the company of the powerful and the fortunate, who are too

* This information, which was left to us by Sagacio Muzzio Gazzata, and was afterwards collected by Pancirola, was published by Muratori in his *Rer. It.* xxiii. 2, in his preface to the Chronicle of Sagacio Gazzata, which however does not contain in its text these particulars. Thence it may be asked whether what Muratori published was only a part of Sagacio's Chronicles, or rather (if I may be so bold as to hazard a conjecture which has not occurred to Muratori) that the Sagacio quoted by Pancirola was another person, and probably the father of the one whose writings Muratori gives us. We think there is more probability for this conjecture, since the latter is called *Sagacino*, and it was usual to give a diminutive to a son who had the same name as his father.

apt to look upon prosperity as merit, and associate misfortune with guilt. Let us not however hastily condemn Dante for having placed himself in this position, nor fancy that we have more pride or greatness of soul. There is a certain simplicity which is natural to men of noble natures, which makes them easily won by fair words and courteous manners, and does not allow them to perceive the humiliations to which they are liable, until they are actually subjected to them. Dante might well esteem himself equal to the highest, and might suppose, in whatever company he chanced to be, he gave more than he received. Not a few instances however are recorded how he was undeceived by the haughty treatment he met with from others. We have a letter of his which was probably written soon after his arrival at the court of Can Grande; it begins thus:—

“To the magnificent and victorious Lord Can Grande della Scala, *Vicar** of the most sacred and serene sovereignty of Verona and Vicenza†, his most devoted Dante Allagherio, a Florentine by birth, but not in manners, desires a happy and long life, and that the glory of his name may ever be increased.

“The praise of your magnificence, spread by a watchful and widely extended fame, makes various impressions

* The word *Vicar* is wanting, but it is clearly understood from the construction of the sentence, as well as from the title *most sacred*, which could only belong to the Roman Empire.

† *In urbe Verona et civitate Vicentia*—thus distinguishing the capital of Cané with a turn of expression that it is impossible to translate.

various persons,—in some it strengthens hope, in others it awakens fear. And I indeed, comparing these efforts with the deeds of modern times, esteemed them to exceed the truth; but not to remain longer in uncertainty, I came to Verona to judge of the truth with my own eyes, like that Eastern Queen who visited Jerusalem, or like Pallas who visited Helicon. I saw your magnificence which had been so widely reported: I both saw and experienced your liberality; and as before I had suspected that what was said was exaggerated, so now I knew that the truth exceeded report. Thus it happened, that from mere hearsay, having become attached to you, and my soul in a certain manner subjected to you, I then at first sight became your most devoted friend. Nor in assuming the name of friend do I consider, as some perhaps will object, that I incur the censure of presumption, as unequals as well as equals may be bound by the sacred bond of friendship; and happy and useful friendships may be seen existing between unequals." He continues to defend with various arguments unequal friendships; he says he has sought among his works some gifts to offer Cane, and that he finds the most sublime part of his *Commedia*, that is to say the *Paradiso*, the most appropriate present; and thus in this letter he dedicates, offers, and recommends it to him*. He then

* He thus deprives Frederick of Sicily of the intended dedication to him of the *Paradiso*, which poem was then not even much advanced.
(TRANSL.)

speaks of the whole work, and enters into an explanation of the allegories. He says he wishes the title of the work to be this, *Thus begins the Commedia of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by birth, but not in manners.* He explains the word *Commedia*, and points out the division of the work into three canticles, and how these are again divided into cantos; and then he goes on to speak of the third canticle, the Paradiso, upon which he was at that time engaged. A minute exposition of it follows, and this occupies the longest part of the letter, but it is only an exposition of the first canto, or rather a part of it. He divides this into two portions, the prologue and the action, and again the prologue into two subdivisions; and he only explains the first part of the prologue in detail, and the latter part in a more general manner. He ends thus:—"This is the general meaning of the second part of the prologue. I shall not at present explain it in detail, because I am prevented by the narrowness of my means (*rei familiaris*); this obliges me to lay aside these and other things which would be conducive to the public weal (*rei publicæ*)*. But I hope from your magnificence to obtain assistance, to enable me to give a more useful exposition of it. Of the other part, *the action*, (which in my division I oppose

* The word *republic* in the Middle Ages is often used for the Empire; so that Dante must have probably meant to point out his work on the Monarchia, which was written to advance the interests of the Empire; and if so, this work could not have been completed before his coming to Verona in the year 1316.

to the whole prologue), I will for the present neither subdivide it, nor in any way explain it, except so far, that as we *shall proceed*, ascending from heaven to heaven, I shall recite the names of the blessed spirits found there in each sphere, and show how this true beatitude is contained in the beginning of that sentence full of truth which is found in St. John: 'This is life eternal to know thee, the true God;' and in Boethius, in the third part of his Consolation, *Te cernere finis**. Whence it is, that in order to show the glory of blessedness in those spirits who are able to see all truth, many questions *will be asked* of them, which things will be of great use, and will give great delight. And because we have found the beginning or source, that is God, we need seek no further, he being the *Alpha* and *Omega*, that is, the beginning and the end, as is demonstrated in the vision of St. John; so let the treatise end in God, who is blessed throughout all ages†."

From this it clearly appears that Dante had already come to Verona, or rather was established there, and that, having experienced the favours of Can Grande, he wished to dedicate to him the Paradiso; and that in doing so, he did not send to him the whole, or even a great part of it, but merely the first canto, and perhaps part of the second; and this naturally explains what Boccaccio

* To discern thee is the great end. (TRANSL.)

† See the works of Dante, Venez. 1758, vol. iv. pt. ii. p. 400; and Witte, *Dantis Epistolæ*, p. 73.

says in the following passage :—" It was his custom when he had written six or eight cantos, wherever he was, (before they were seen by others,) to send them to Messer Cane della Scala, whom he revered beyond all men ; and when they had been seen by him, he allowed any one who liked to have a copy of them. And in this manner, having sent to him all but the thirteen last cantos, and having written these, but not yet sent them, it so happened that he died without recollecting to leave them to any one*."

It is true that Boccaccio, in describing this manner of publication, is speaking of the whole poem ; but as a few pages afterwards he speaks of Uguccone, Morocello Malaspina, and Frederick of Sicily, as the three to whom Dante dedicated his three canticles, and adds, " Some would have it, that he dedicated the whole to Messer Cane," it shows that he gives us two accounts which were generally reported, and that he did not know that Cane was substituted in the place of Frederick. The confession of poverty that Dante makes in this letter deserves great attention. The same sentiments, in almost the same words, are given to us by the Poet in that long dialogue between him and his ancestor Cacciaguida in the Paradiso, from which we have quoted largely†. In that part which relates to his first taking refuge with Bartholommeo, Cane's brother, we remark that he praises him for having *anticipated* his requests, and in these praises

* Boccaccio, p. 88.

† Paradiso, c. 15-17.

casts a reproach on Cane, whose favours it seems he was at least obliged to beg. Amid the pangs of exile he puts the following lines in the mouth of Cacciaguida :—

“ 'Tis thine to prove what bitter savour bears
The bread of others, and how hard to wend
Upward and downward by another's stairs.”
Paradiso, c. 17, v. 58–60.

This certainly was meant for a haughty reproof to his powerful host, but he also praises him directly, and in magnificent terms, as follows :—

“ With him* shall one† be found, who at his birth,
Was by this ardent star so fraught with grace,
His deeds of valour shall display his worth.
Not yet his greatness by the world is seen,
So tender is his age‡; for scarce nine years
Around him whirling have these circles been.
But ere the Gascon's§ artifice deceive
Great Henry, he, all sordid hopes and fears
Despising, shall a glorious name achieve.
His deeds magnificent shall still proclaim
His praise so loudly, that his very foes
Shall be compell'd to celebrate his fame ||.
Look thou to his beneficence; for he
Of fortunes in such manner shall dispose,
Rich shall be poor, and poor exalted be.

* Bartholommeo della Scala, Cane's brother.

† Cane.

‡ In the year 1300, the period of the action of the poem.

§ The Gascon is Pope Clement V.

|| These lines are almost word for word with the beginning of the letter.

Stamp these predictions in thy memory ;
 But be they not divulged." Then things he told,
 Incredible, though witness'd by the eye.

Paradiso, c. 17, v. 76-93.

Scarcely had Cacciaguida finished his prediction, when Dante puts the following lines in his own mouth, and thus addresses his ancestor :—

"Sire," I began, "I mark how time for me
 Destines a blow, most fatal unto those
 Who look for it with most despondency.
 Therefore with foresight let me arm my breast,
 That if I lose *the place I cherish most*,
The boldness of my verse lose not the rest."

Paradiso, c. 17, v. 100-111.

The interest of this beautiful passage, which continues to the end of the canto, is much enhanced if we consider the situation of the poet when he was writing it. *The place I cherish most*, of verse 110, is certainly Florence, and Verona must be the place (or one of the places) which he fears to lose *from the boldness of his verse*.

History, tradition, and the after fortunes of Dante, all agree in proving that there was a rupture between him and Cane; if it did not amount to a quarrel, there seems to have been some misunderstanding between the magnificent protector and his haughty client. But which of the two was in fault? I have collected all the memorials that remain relating to this, and let every one judge for himself. But I must warn my readers

that Petrarch, the second of the three Fathers of the Italian language, showed much less veneration than our good Boccaccio for their common predecessor Dante. Petrarch speaks as follows:—"My fellow-citizen Dante Alighieri was a man highly distinguished in the vulgar tongue*, but in his style and speech a little daring, and rather freer than was pleasing to delicate and studious ears, or gratifying to the princes of our times. He then, while banished from his country, resided at the court of Can Grande, where the afflicted universally found consolation and an asylum. He at first was held in much honour by Can, but afterwards he by degrees fell out of favour, and day by day less pleased that lord. Actors and parasites of every description used to be collected together at the same banquet; one of these, most impudent in his words and in his obscene gestures, obtained much importance and favour with many. And Cane, suspecting that Dante disliked this, called the man before him, and having greatly praised him to our Poet, said: 'I wonder how it is that this silly fellow should know how to please all, and should be loved by all, and that thou canst not, who art said to be so wise!' Dante answered: 'Thou wouldst not wonder, if thou knewest that friendship is founded on similarity of habits and dispositions†.'"

It is also related that at his table, which was too

* Italian language.

† Petrarca, *Rer. Memorab.*, lib. ii. chap. iv. p. 427. Basil ed.

indiscriminately hospitable, where buffoons sat down with Dante, and where jests passed which must have been offensive to every person of refinement, but disgraceful when uttered by the superior in rank to his inferior, a boy was once concealed under the table, who, collecting the bones that were thrown there by the guests, according to the custom of those times, heaped them up at Dante's feet. When the tables were removed, the great heap appearing, Can pretended to show much astonishment, and said: "Certainly Dante is a great devourer of meat." To which Dante readily replied: "My lord, you would not have seen so many bones had I been a dog (*Cane*)*."

But besides the sumptuous discourtesy of the Prince, and the defensive or offensive pride of the refugee, there were other more serious causes which might have caused a quarrel between them. These have been pointed out to us by the sagacious author of the *Veltro*. Can recognised Frederick of Austria as Emperor, and Dante in his dedication of the *Monarchia*, Louis of Bavaria; but Uguccone, by the concessions he obtained in 1314 and 1315, must also have acknowledged Louis, and we see that he remained with Scala after this period; so it is not probable that this alone was the cause of Dante's leaving Verona, though it may very possibly have been the origin of mutual disagreement, and this disagreement might have caused the departure of the unyielding poet.

* Cinzio Giral di, *Itacatomiti*, Dec. vii., nov. 6.

But we have a record of Dante's stay at Verona, which opens a field to new conjectures, and perhaps satisfactory ones. It seems that at this time he was regularly settled there, and intended to reside there permanently. He had his eldest son Pietro with him, who continued to live there after the death of his father; and some of his descendants are still found in that city. It appears that Dante officiated as judge at Verona. Such an office must not only have taken up a great deal of the poet's time, but must have been very distasteful to him. We have seen, and shall see, Dante to the end invariably prefer a contemplative to an active life, and his studies, to the burdens laid on him by his Republic, by his party, and by his protectors in exile. But the offices that were before and afterwards assigned to him were in a manner adapted to him; whereas here he must have been one of those judges guided by the Podestà, which are so frequently mentioned and laughed at in the old novels (*Novelle*),—an office which must have been very derogatory to the old Ambassador and Prior of powerful Florence. Now that Dante felt this, we have a proof in the passage I have in this chapter quoted from his letter, in which he complains that *the narrowness of his means* is an impediment to his pursuing his studies, and that he hopes this impediment will be removed by the generosity of Can Grande. These complaints and hopes can only be explained by supposing that there was some official situation that occupied in

an unpleasing manner the time and thoughts of the Poet, and it is most probable that he alluded to the office which it is recorded he held at this time. There appears to me scarcely any doubt that Dante was made a judge at Verona by the bounty of Can Grande, who, we thus see, did not possess great delicacy of discernment in his appreciation of character; and after having some time chewed the bit, and experienced this additional smart of exile, the haughty Poet set himself free, without caring whether he offended his patron or not; and he *did* offend. One of the cantos of the *Paradiso*, written at Verona and sent to Cane, begins with the admirable lines which head the present chapter, and which thus unnecessarily introduced, as if from spontaneous inspiration, points out the condition of the mind of the writer, and may be called an out-burst or song of gladness after having cast aside (either in reality or in imagination) all those cares of mortals which he calls insensate or senseless. Among these cares he mentions *law* and the *rule by sophistry or force*, which, whether it was or was not meant to allude to his protector, must at least have left in Cane's mind a suspicion of some insulting allusion.

On the whole, whatever more general or more precise interpretation may be given to Dante's words, they agree too well with tradition and historical documents, to leave any room for doubt of the mutual offences between him and Cane, and that the exile lost favour at the court of

Verona. But Dante was compensated for it by popular favour, which is at least a proof of wide-spread fame. This is seen by the narrative of Boccaccio, which is so much the more precious, as it gives us a description of Dante's personal appearance at the time of his present residence at Verona, when he was upwards of fifty years old :—" This poet of ours was then of moderate stature, and since he had arrived at a mature age he walked a little stooping, and his walk was slow and quiet, and he was always well dressed, and in a habit suitable to his mature age. His face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes rather great than small, his jaws large, and his under lip projected beyond his upper lip. He had a brown complexion, his hair and beard were thick, black, and curly, and his countenance was always melancholy and thoughtful ; on which account, one day it happened at Verona (for the fame of his works had been everywhere spread, and particularly that part of the *Commedia* which was called the *Inferno*, and he was known to many, both men and women), that he, passing before a door where many women were sitting, one of them said to another softly, but not so softly but that she could be well heard by him, ' Look at the man who goes into hell, and returns when he pleases, and brings news to us here above, from those there below.' To which one of them answered simply, ' Verily thou must speak the truth. Dost not thou see how the heat and smoke down below has given him so dark a colour and

so curled a beard?' Which words he hearing, Dante looked back on them, and perceiving that these women spoke seriously, was amused, and almost pleased that they held such opinions, and smiling a little he continued his walk. In his public and domestic habits he was wonderfully composed and orderly, and in all he did, above all others, courteous and polite. In his diet he was most moderate, taking his repasts at fixed hours, and not exceeding what necessity required: he indulged neither in eating or drinking to any excess. He praised delicate viands, and usually partook of the commonest; he blamed above all those who study much to have choice dainties, and have them prepared with great care. No one was more earnest than he, both in his studies, and in any other object on which he was intent; so much so, that many times both his family and his wife complained of it, before having become accustomed to his ways, when they ceased to care for it. He rarely spoke, unless he was questioned, and then deliberately, and with a voice suited to the matter on which he spoke. Nevertheless, when it was required he was most eloquent and flowing, and with an excellent and ready delivery."

CHAPTER XIV.

A BEAUTIFUL LETTER OF DANTE'S.—MONASTERY OF
 FONTE AVELLANA.—BOSONE DA GUBBIO.—PAGANO
 DELLA TORRE.

1317—1319.

Indignant soul,
 Blessed be she that bore thee.

Inferno, c. 8, v. 44, 45.

WE have seen that in the year 1314, after the discomfiture at Monte Catini, Dante received a fourth and last sentence of condemnation, pronounced against him and other exiles by King Robert's Vicar in Florence. Ugucione having been expelled from Pisa, which had become Guelf, under Gaddo della Gherardesca, a peace was concluded between her and Florence and other cities, on the 12th of May, 1317, which became almost general in Tuscany. The only enemy now of Florence was Lucca,

governed by Castruccio Castracani, a man full of ambition, but who had not yet become dangerous. This peace tranquillized in some degree the fears and the rage of the Guelf rulers of Florence, and they consented to recall some of the exiles. But as they had tarnished the merit of their former act of moderation, by the numerous exceptions they had made, so now they must be equally blamed for the conditions they exacted from those of their banished fellow-citizens whom they allowed to return to their country. It was an ancient custom in Florence, at the feast of St. John, to pardon some of the condemned criminals, offering them up with a candle in their hands to the Saint, and making them pay a fine. But in this year of peace, and probably for the first time, political offenders were admitted to this favour which had been granted to criminals. A nephew of Dante's, and some other of his friends, entreated him to avail himself of it. A monk, according to the custom of the times, made the proposal to him from them, and we are fortunate enough to possess Dante's answer. We have quoted several of his other letters, and we have not been able to praise them; but there can be but one opinion as regards the one we are now going to bring forward. The style even, which is obscure in his other letters, is in this clear as his thoughts.

“ In your letters, which I received with due reverence and affection, I have read with gratitude and diligent consideration, how much at heart you have the thoughts

of my restoration to my country ; and with this kindness you have so much the more closely attached me to you, as it is rare for exiles to meet with friends. But to the contents of that letter I answer, and if perhaps not in the manner that the pusillanimity of some would desire, I entreat you, before you judge me, that you will take my answer into your consideration. See then by the letters of your nephew and mine*, and by those of some others of my friends, it is signified to me that by an ordinance lately made in Florence relating to the pardon of the banished, if I would pay a certain sum of money, and suffer the disgrace of the offering, I should be pardoned and allowed immediately to return. In this truly there are two things that may be smiled at, and are ill advised on the part of those who have expressed them : for *your* letters, with more discretion and judgement, contain no such thing. And what is this glorious edict that recalls Dante Allagherio to his country, after having endured nearly three lustrums of exile ? Is this the reward of an innocence evident to all ? of the sweat and labour of constant study ? Far be it from a man familiar with philosophy to show a baseness of heart so rash and earthy as to allow himself to be offered up almost in fetters, and in a manner almost befitting Ciolo† and other such wretches. Far be it from a man who is a teacher of justice, after having suffered injustice, to pay down his

* Perhaps it ought to be : *Letters from you, and from my nephew.*

† The name probably of some infamous criminal of that time.

own money to those who have thus injured him! This, O my Father, is not the way that I should return to my country. Another may be found either by you, or in time by others, which shall not derogate from Dante's fame and honour. *That* I will accept, and not tardily. But if there is no other way to enter Florence but that, I will never enter Florence. And what then? Shall I not enjoy, wherever I may be, the sight of the sun and the stars? Shall I not be able to speculate on most delightful truth, under whatever sky I may be, without first bowing ingloriously, or rather ignominiously, before the people of Florence? Nor shall I want bread*." . . .

We possess no more of this letter, but history gives us the result. Not a few who were associated with Dante in his condemnation and in his exile—Tosinghi, Mannelli, and Rinucci†—accepted their pardon on this condition, and were offered up on St. John's day, 1317. Nor do I blame them. They had no pretensions to greatness,—they had not the dignity of a Dante to preserve,—with different rights they had different duties. But the greatest citizen and the glory of Florence remained an exile, owing to the petty jealousies of his fellow-citizens, who exercised such ignoble municipal

* Polli, p. 204. Witto, *Dantis Epis.* viii. The latter places this letter before that addressed to Can Grande. But notwithstanding the reverence due to his authority on all relating to Dante, I consider that my reasons are indisputable, which make me fix the date of the letter to Cane in 1316, and that to the Monk in 1317.

† Veltro, p. 160. Foscolo.

tyranny ; and he died an exile, and his bones were laid, and still lie, without the walls of Florence, and so live his descendants to the present day. Some perhaps will smile at this, and will ask what it signifies ; and so probably asked those tyrannical plebeians on the day of St. John, when they saw their humiliated fellow-citizens pass before them with candle in hand, and they missed among the train him whom they called the scornful, presumptuous, arrogant Alighieri.

There is every probability that this letter was written about the beginning of 1317, during his stay at Verona, for he remained there till 1318. But there is a very old tradition, that in 1318 Dante made some stay in the monastery of Ponte Avellana, near Gubbio, of which Fra Moricone was Prior, and it is not improbable that *he* might have been the good monk who had transmitted to Dante the proposals to return to his country ; and that, though Dante had rejected them, he might now perhaps have visited him, either from gratitude or from some lingering hope. Let us consider the plausible conjectures and the beautiful description of an eye-witness of the spot :—

“The monastery is built on the steepest mountains of Umbria. Catria, the giant of the Apennines, hangs over it, and so overshadows it that in some months of the year the light is frequently shut out. A difficult and lonely path through the forests leads to the ancient *hospitium* of these courteous hermits, who point out the

apartments where their predecessors lodged Alighieri*. We may read his name repeatedly on the walls; the marble effigy of him bears witness to the honourable care with which the memory of the great Italian is preserved from age to age in that silent retirement. The Prior Moricone received him there in 1318, and the annals of Avellana relate this event with pride. But if they had been silent, it would be quite sufficient to have seen Catria, and to have read Dante's description of it, to be assured that he ascended it. There, from the woody summit of the rock, he gazed upon his country, and rejoiced in the thought that he was not far from her. He struggled with his desire to return to her; and when he *was* able to return, he banished himself anew, not to submit to dishonour. Having descended the mountain, he admired the ancient manners of the inhabitants of Avellana, but he showed little indulgence to his hosts, who appeared to him to have lost their old virtues†. At this time, and during his residence near Gubbio, it seems that he must have written the five cantos of the Paradiso after the twentieth; because when he mentions Florence in the twenty-first canto he speaks of Catria, and in what he says in the twenty-fifth, of wishing to receive his poetic crown on his baptismal font‡, we

* See Pelli, pp. 134 and 135, who quotes a little book with this title, *Cronistorio dell' antica, nobile ed osservante Abbadia di S. Croce della Fonte Avellana nell' Umbria dell' ordine Camaldolese. Sienna, 1723. 4to.*

† Paradiso, c. 21, v. 106–111, 113–120. ‡ *Ibid.* c. 25, v. 1–12.

can perceive his hope to be restored to his country and his beautiful fold (*ovile*) when time should have overcome the difficulties of the manner of his return*.”

The twenty-first canto of the *Paradiso*, the first of those which the author of the *Veltro* conjectures to have been written in that solitary retreat, the first certainly that was not sent to Cane, begins thus:—

Now on the face of my loved lady were
My eyes and mind again intently stay'd;
Nor other object occupied my care.

Paradiso, c. 21, v. 1–3.

And the feeling, or rather the inward sentiments which inspired these verses, agree so well with all the preceding conjectures, that there is little doubt that the first canto which was not sent to Cane was begun after Dante had left his court. Besides, the whole canto celebrates the contemplative life of hermit saints, placed (without any other apparent reason) in the heaven of Saturn. Among these hermits he places San Pier Damiano, the contemporary of Gregory VII., and that Pope's colleague in his first war against ecclesiastical corruption, who had formerly resided in this same monastery of Fonte Avellana; he, asked by Dante who he was, thus replied:—

“Twixt the two shores of Italy are found
A line of hills so steep, thy country near,
That underneath them do the thunders sound:

* *Veltro*, pp. 165, 166.

They form a ridge, by name of Catria known ;
 Beneath whose shelter, dedicate to prayer,
 Standeth a holy hermitage alone."
 Thus the third time the spirit spake ;—then said,
 His speech continuing, " My thoughts were there
 On God so wholly and intently stay'd,
 That though on olives it was mine to live,
 I bore with ease the extremes of heat and cold,
 Feeding my mind with thoughts contemplative.
 That cloister to these heavens was wont to yield
 Rich harvest once ; but empty now the fold :
 A truth ere many years to be reveal'd.
 There Pietro Damiano was I hight."

Paradiso, c. 21, v. 106-121.

About two centuries and a half later Dante's censure was in a manner confirmed by Pius V., who suppressed these monks on account of their relaxed discipline, and gave their monastery to the Camaldolites*.

Shortly afterwards, about the close of the twenty-fourth canto, Dante lays himself under a scholastic examination of faith ; he makes St. Peter crown him in Paradise, and he therefore begins the twenty-fifth canto in this haughty strain :—

Should it befall that o'er the Sacred lay,
 To which have lent their aid both Heaven and Earth,
 While year by year my body pined away—
 O'ercome the cruelty that is my bar
 From the fair fold † where I, a Lamb, had birth,
 Foe to the ravening Wolves ‡ its peace who mar ;

* Pelli, p. 135, n. 14.

† The *fair fold* is meant for Florence. (TRANSL.)

‡ The Guelfs. (TRANSL.)

With other voice, with other flooce, shall I
 Poet, return, and at that shrine* be crown'd
 Which my baptismal fountain did supply.

Paradiso, c. 25, v. 1-9.

Now, far from concluding from the above passage, as some do, that new hopes had awakened in Dante's breast, it seems to me rather, that from the late injuries he had received from the rulers of Florence, he despaired ever to return as long as they remained in power. And what is more, in his vision of a coronation in the Baptistery of San Giovanni, we perceive a reminiscence, or we may rather call it a stroke of revenge or triumph,—an imagined compensation given to himself, and by himself, for the insult they had proposed to offer him in that very sanctuary. We shall soon see that this idea was developed, and took almost a corporate reality, becoming whatever name we choose to give it,—the weakness, the dream, or rather the dotage of his latter days; for men grow old through misfortunes as well as the lapse of years.

A little before or a little after his stay at the Monastery of Fonte Avellana, many place his residence at the neighbouring town of Gubbio, in the castle of Colmollaro, belonging to his disciple and commentator Messer Bosone de' Raffaelli. Bosone belonged to the Raffaelli, one of the oldest and most powerful families of the city of Gubbio; it had long resided there, and

* The Baptistery of Florence. (TRANSL.)

probably does so at the present day, under the altered name of Caffarelli, which has been rendered recently illustrious in foreign service. Bosone was born, according to the belief of his descendant and biographer, about the year 1280, of a Ghibelline family, and Bosone himself was a Ghibelline*. Driven with others of his party from his native city in 1300, and having taken refuge in Arezzo, where his father had been Podestà many years earlier, it is supposed that Bosone even at that time formed a friendship with Dante†. At any rate, in 1311, perhaps through the intervention of Henry VII., we find Bosone returned to Gubbio, where he composed a romance entitled *L'Avventuroso Ciciliano*‡. At the death of Henry VII., the Ghibellines were again expelled from Gubbio, on the 1st of October, 1315, and among them we find Bosone mentioned by name. He was next Podestà in Arezzo, from the 13th of September, 1316, to the 13th of March, 1317, and during the rest of the year in Viterbo§. Therefore, supposing that Bosone returned to Gubbio in 1318, his, and almost all Dante's biographers place Dante's residence with him about that year. But as Bosone was in Gubbio from 1311 to 1315, and as we are not acquainted with all Dante's proceedings during that period, the time of

* Of the family, offices, and works of Bosone da Gubbio, see the Treatise of Francesco Maria Raffaelli in the *Deliciae Eruditorum de Lami*, Firenze, 1775, pp. 65, 66.

† Raffaelli, pp. 79, 80.

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 80, 90, 91.

§ *Ibid.* pp. 96-98.

his visit to Bosone must remain doubtful between those two dates; I confess however that it is most probable that it was in 1318, when he visited the neighbouring monastery of Fonte Avellana. At any rate an inscription recording the Poet's residence at Gubbio is to be found in that city*; and it is supposed that not only there, but also in the castle of Colmollaro, on the banks of the Suonda, Dante resided, and wrote poetry in company with Bosone and his son of the same name†. As a proof of this, a sonnet of his is brought forward, addressed to Bosone in praise of his son's studies; if this sonnet was really written by Dante (which appears to me impossible), we must allow that the greatest poets may occasionally write the most wretched verses. Others also conjecture that Dante was Greek master to the young Bosone, and they add a fellow pupil, a certain Ubaldo, a son of a certain Bastiano, the author of a certain book entitled *Telentelagio*‡. Bosone survived Dante many years, and was afterwards Imperial Vicar at Pisa, and Senator of Rome; but amidst his dignities he preserved so warm a devotion to the superior greatness of his friend, that he wrote in verse almost a commentary on the *Commedia*, and now he is better known from this reflected light than from his own. Bosone is not mentioned by Dante in any part of his poem; but that is not to be wondered at, if the friendship between them

* See the inscription in Raffaelli.

† *Ibid.* p. 113, etc.

‡ Pelli, p. 137.

did not begin, or at least did not become intimate, until 1318; for the *Paradiso* was then finished, or so nearly that there was no room or opportunity for this recollection of Bosone.

The time of Dante's residence at Udine, the ancient see of the Patriarchs of Aquileia, can be more exactly ascertained. To one of these Patriarchs, Gastone della Torre, who died in August 1318, Pagano della Torre succeeded, at the end of the year, or beginning of 1319*.

"Pagano was a magnanimous and prudent lord, a great protector of the learned, and with him Dante Alighieri took refuge, a Florentine, a most celebrated poet and philosopher, and an exile owing to the factions of the Bianchi and Neri. With this lord he resided with much satisfaction for a long time, and with him he often frequented the beautiful district of Tolmino, a castle situated among the mountains above Cividale, about thirty miles from Friuli,—a most delightful place in summer weather, from the beauty and inconceivable profusion of the clearest and most wholesome brooks and streams, from the very healthy air, from the loftiness of the mountains and terrible depth of the valleys, from the narrow defiles and novel interest of the country, which, though of a very savage description, unites to the terrors of its situation a delightful view of meadows, rivers, and fertile and well-cultivated lands. In this charming spot, which appeared created for the speculations of philoso-

* Pelli, p. 139. Veltro, p. 170.

phers and poets, it is supposed that Dante wrote for the gratification of Pagano some parts of his poem, as there are descriptions in it which correspond with this country. And a rock which projects over the river Tolmino seems to give credit to this conjecture; it is called even at the present day by the peasants of the country *Dante's Seat*, and fame has spread from mouth to mouth the tradition that on this spot he wrote upon *the nature of fishes**."

This tradition of Dante's rock, and of his wandering through the Julian Caves (*Antri Giulii*), has been confirmed by Boccaccio in his letter in verse addressed to Petrarch†. And it is said also that our Poet visited Ugone Count of Duino, in a castle of that name, towering upon a rock on the other side of the river Isonzo‡.

But this retreat with Pagano della Torre discloses a new secret of Dante's mind. Pagano was, like his predecessor Gastone, of the very family of the Torriani who had been so long the chief Guelfs of Milan; for which cause they had been expelled eight years before, when Henry crossed the Alps and was crowned King of Italy§. Therefore the fact of Dante and other Florentine exiles taking refuge in Udine, shows a moderation in party spirit, not only in Pagano who received them, but also

* See Giacomo Valvassoni's summary of the Life of the Four Patriarchs of the House of Torre, a fragment of a Chigi manuscript with the date 1561, published by the Abbate Fea. (New Observations on the Divina Commedia, Rome, 1830.)

† Boccaccio, Ed. Min. note, vol. v. p. 133.

‡ Veltro, p. 172.

§ *Ibid.* p. 171.

in those who accepted this retreat. This cannot be disputed; and yet on the other hand Boccaccio seems to say that Dante, in his latter years and in Romagna, where we shall soon see him close his life, became a fiercer Ghibelline than ever.

"He was," says Boccaccio, "a most excellent man, and most resolute in adversity. It was only on one subject that he showed himself, I do not know whether I ought to call it impatient, or spirited,—it was regarding anything relating to Party; since in his exile he was more violent in this respect than suited his circumstances, and more than he was willing that others should believe. And in order that it may be seen for what party he was thus violent and pertinacious, it appears to me I must go further back in my story. I believe that it was the just anger of God that permitted, it is a long time ago, almost all Tuscany and Lombardy to be divided into two parties; I do not know how they acquired those names, but one party was called Guelf and the other party Ghibelline. And these two names were so revered, and had such an effect on the folly of many minds, that, for the sake of defending the side any one had chosen for his own against the opposite party, it was not considered hard to lose property, and even life if it were necessary. And under these names the Italian cities many times suffered serious grievances and changes; and among the rest our city, which was sometimes at the head of one party, and sometimes of the

other, according to the citizens in power ; so much so that Dante's ancestors, being Guelfs, were twice expelled by the Ghibellines from their home, and he likewise under the title of Guelf held the reins of the Florentine Republic, from which he was expelled, as we have shown, not by the Ghibellines, but by the Guelfs ; and seeing that he could not return, he so much altered his mind that there never was a fiercer Ghibelline, or a bitterer enemy to the Guelfs than he was. And that which I feel most ashamed at for the sake of his memory is, that it was a well-known thing in Romagna, that if any boy or girl, talking to him on party matters, condemned the Ghibelline side, he would become frantic, so that if they did not be silent he would have been induced to throw stones at them ; and with this violence of party feeling he lived until his death. I am certainly ashamed to tarnish with any fault the fame of such a man ; but the order of my subject in some degree demands it, because if I were silent in those things in which he was to blame, I should not be believed in those things I have already related in his praise. Therefore I excuse myself to himself, who perhaps looks down from heaven with a disdainful eye on me writing.*"

Every one must here perceive the want of earnestness in our good Boccaccio, who cared little about Guelfs and Ghibellines, and did not even know whence their names were derived ; and who, having all his life lived in literary

* Boccaccio, *Vita*, pp. 79, 80.

ease in the Guelf states of Florence, Naples, and France*, gave ready ear to the more or less true reports which were spread among the Guelfs regarding the exiles, whom they made out all to be Ghibellines, and every Ghibelline they called a fierce, obstinate, incorrigible partisan.

Such was not Dante. That he was called a Ghibelline before he was one, with the rest of the Bianchi, we have already seen. That his indignation induced him afterwards to become a Ghibelline, and even a fierce one, we must allow. But did he believe himself to be, or profess himself to be one? Certainly not, and of this we have from himself the strongest proofs. In the sixth canto of the *Paradiso*, probably written in Canç's Ghibelline court, he introduces Justinian relating the various fortunes of the Eagle, that is to say of the Roman Empire; he certainly writes this in the spirit of a Ghibelline, very much in the same strain in which he had shortly before written in prose on the same subject. However even in the beginning Justinian tells Dante that he undertakes this narrative,—

That thou may'st see how great the blame of those
Who move against the sacred standard—first,
Those who are ranged beneath it—next, its foes.

Paradiso, c. 6, v. 31-33.

Here then he not only reproves the Imperialists or Ghibellines fighting under the banner of the Eagle, but

* The Kings of France were the great supporters of the Guelf party.
(TRANSL.)

Dante's *Paradiso*, as we have said, is founded upon the old Ptolemaic system. The earth is placed in the centre of the world; round it move in circles, one above the other, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, the heaven of the fixed stars, and the *Primum Mobile*, which carries along with it all the other heavens. Lastly, above these nine moving astronomical heavens is the motionless heaven the *Empyreum*, the Throne of God. If we do not reckon this last, which contains the whole Universe, the nine heavens of the *Paradise* correspond with the nine circles of Hell and the nine ledges of Purgatory; it is also to be remarked how each of the three parts of the poem agree in having thirty-three cantos, with an introductory one in addition to the *Inferno*, making one hundred in all; also, that each of the three parts ends with the word and rhyme of *Stelle*. These may be observed as trivialities belonging to a great mind.

The ascent from the terrestrial Paradise at the summit of Purgatory to the Moon, and from thence to the other higher heavens, is accomplished by Beatrice fixing her eyes on the sun like an eagle, and then raising them continually higher and higher towards the Throne of God, and by Dante's fixing his eyes on hers, which become always brighter and brighter, and she more radiant with smiles, as they continue rising. Beatrice explains this ascension by a natural cause in this manner; that "the great sea of being" always tends toward God, as soon as it is

rather superstitious idolatry of the Ghibelline cause, he here plainly condemns both parties, and therefore does not profess himself to belong to either of them; and between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, as before between the Bianchi and Neri, he only professed *to form a party by himself*. This desire of his to take a middle course is nothing else than a homage that he paid to moderation in politics, and a kind of declaration and protest made in his sober judgement, that after all moderation alone deserves praise.

The confessions of his political faith, which we have quoted from the sixth canto of the Paradiso, were certainly written in the Ghibelline court of Cane, and not in the Guelf court of the Patriarch Torriano; therefore Dante can never be accused of changing his opinions on that account. I think the author of the Veltro's conjecture is very probable, that it was at Udine, at the court of Pagano della Torre, and at his instigation, that Dante wrote his history of the Guelf and Ghibelline factions*. Filelfo has given us no account of this work except its beginning, which was as follows:—"Having our own affairs to relate, I fear much to speak of anything presumptuously or without sufficient deliberation†." The loss of this history is certainly much to be regretted, as it treats on a subject of such great interest to us, and

* Veltro, p. 171. Pagano della Torre is well known to have given great encouragement to the histories written by Albertino Mussato, which were in very elegant language for that time.

† Pelli, p. 198.

was written by a contemporary and by a man like Dante. But it was not labour entirely lost, if, as we may suppose, it was a soothing occupation for the great mind of our poet, who was now fast approaching to the close of his earthly career.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARADISO.

ABOUT 1320.

The glory of the Lord, to all things given.

Paradiso, c. 1, v. 1.

THE last part of the *Commedia*, which Dante finished about this time, and of which we intend to give some account in this chapter, is said to be the most difficult and obscure part of the whole poem. And it is so; and it would be in vain for us to attempt to awaken in the generality of readers that attention which Dante has not been able to obtain for himself. Readers in general will always be repulsed by the difficulties of its numerous allegories, by the series of heavens, arranged according to the now forgotten Ptolemaic system, and more than all by disquisitions on philosophy and theology which often degenerate into mere scholastic themes. With the exception of the three cantos relating to Cacciaguida, and a

few other episodes which recall us to earth, as well as those verses in which frequently Dante's love for Beatrice shines forth, the *Paradiso* must not be considered as pleasant reading for the general reader, but as an especial recreation for those who find there, expressed in sublime verse, those contemplations that have been the subjects of their philosophical and theological studies. It was with this view Dante wrote this canticle, as he says plainly in the beginning of the *Paradiso* :—

O ye who fain would listen to my song,
 Following in little bark full eagerly
 My venturous ship, that chanting hies along,
 Turn back unto your native shores again ;
 Tempt not the deep, lest, haply losing me,
 In unknown paths bewilder'd ye remain*.
 I am the first this voyage to essay,
 Minerva breathes,—Apollo is my guide,—
 And new-born Muses do the Bears display†.
 Ye other few, who have look'd up on high
 For Angels' food betimes, e'en here supplied
 Largely, but not enough to satisfy,
 'Mid the deep ocean ye your course may take,
 My track pursuing the pure waters through,
 Ere reunites the quickly closing wake.

Paradiso, c. 2, v. 1-15.

But few will always be the students of philosophy and

* The Poet warns those who would follow him in his dangerous voyage, not to make the attempt unless they have betimes accustomed themselves to heavenly contemplations. (Wright.)

† Minerva, or Celestial Wisdom, inspires him ; Apollo, the Minister of Grace, is his guide,—and a glorious constellation directs him upwards to the abode of the heavenly Muses. (Wright.)

theology, and much fewer those who look upon these sciences as almost one and the same thing, pursued by two different methods; these, if I am not mistaken, will find in Dante's *Paradiso* a treasure of thought, and the loftiest and most soothing words of comfort, forerunners of the joys of Heaven itself. Above all the *Paradiso* will delight those who find themselves, when they are reading it, in a somewhat similar disposition of mind to that of Dante when he was writing it; those in short who, after having in their youth lived in the world, and sought happiness in it, have now arrived at maturity, old age, or satiety, and seek by the means of philosophy and theology to know as far as possible of that other world on which their hopes now rest. Philosophy is the romance of the aged, and Religion the only future history for us all. Both these subjects of contemplation we find in Dante's *Paradiso*, and pursued with a rare modesty, not beyond the limits of our understanding, and with due submission to the Divine Law which placed these limits.

I shall not stop here to point out all the passages full of philosophic beauties: it would be a labour neither suited to me nor perhaps to most of my readers. But I wonder that, amid so much study of even scholastic philosophy as has engaged so many in our times, a place has not been found for the eclectic philosophy of Dante, which would throw a new light on the history of that science, and would give greater facility and greater enjoyment to the reading of the whole *Commedia*.

Dante's *Paradiso*, as we have said, is founded upon the old Ptolemaic system. The earth is placed in the centre of the world; round it move in circles, one above the other, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, the heaven of the fixed stars, and the *Primum Mobile*, which carries along with it all the other heavens. Lastly, above these nine moving astronomical heavens is the motionless heaven the Empyreum, the Throne of God. If we do not reckon this last, which contains the whole Universe, the nine heavens of the Paradise correspond with the nine circles of Hell and the nine ledges of Purgatory; it is also to be remarked how each of the three parts of the poem agree in having thirty-three cantos, with an introductory one in addition to the *Inferno*, making one hundred in all; also, that each of the three parts ends with the word and rhyme of *Stelle*. These may be observed as trivialities belonging to a great mind.

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freed from the obstacles which retain all forms in their places*,—a beautiful and magnificent idea, and far more poetical than the other two inventions,—the funnel or hollowed cone for Hell, and the pyramid or elevated cone for Purgatory. When it was the universal opinion that the human race was placed in the centre of the Universe, created for them alone, there could be no better explanation given of the heavens, no more beautiful thoughts expressed regarding them, no mind could have wandered wider or risen higher. But how much grander and more varied had been Dante's *Paradiso* had he been acquainted with later science, which makes this earth so small a part of the solar system, which in its turn is a part of other systems contained in others, in an infinity so incomprehensible to us;—we, creatures and spirits superior to all this matter, but more or less similar perhaps to other spiritual creatures, contemplating from all points and adoring the Infinite Spirit, all tending towards Him from whom and by whom we are created. We do not know whether another Dante will ever arise, to write poetry on this new system of astronomy; but who by lifting up his eyes cannot catch a glimpse of such poetry? Science cannot be opposed either to Truth or Poetry, nor is it true that these are opposed to one another. It is not many years ago, notwithstanding the examples of Milton, Dante, and Klopstock, that there were men who still ventured to wish for *the times of the*

* *Paradiso*, c. 1, v. 118.

false and lying Gods, as being more poetical. Now the world is undeceived, and to this it is owing in a great measure that the study of Dante has been revived. But lately another opinion has gained ground, namely, that the advancement of the sciences is hostile to the arts that depend on the imagination. But the science possessed by man, however far it may be advanced, must ever fall short when compared with the infinite truth and beauty of the Universe, and so must always leave enough room for that imaginative faculty which has been granted to us, to wander through space beyond science into infinity. Science will never be anything else than the point from which imagination takes its flight, and the higher this point is, the more sublime will be the flight of our imagination.

As regards the order of Dante's heavens, we observe that in the three lower planets are many souls—blessed indeed, and participators of the joys of Paradise, and contented with the share of it that is allotted to them by the Supreme Will, but yet detained in these lower heavens by their imperfections. In the Moon are only the spirits of some women, who having made vows of chastity have been constrained to break them; and among these is the charming Piccarda, the sister of Forese and Corso Donati*. In Mercury Dante finds those who were actuated in life more by a thirst for honour than by the love of God†; among these is Justinian, who tells the

* Paradiso, c. 2-5.

† *Ibid.* c. 6, v. 113.

long history of the eagle or Roman Empire, to which we have alluded*. In the third star, Venus, are penitent spirits indeed, but those who have erred through the influence of love; among these are Carlo Martello, a Prince of Anjou and friend of Dante's youth, and Cunizza da Romano†. Thus it is only in the fourth heaven, the Sun, that we begin to find spirits entirely free from sin; and this agrees with all the allegorics, and we may say with all the hymns addressed to the Sun that are sung by the Poet, not only here, but even from the beginning of the *Divina Commedia*.

In this luminary, the source of all earthly light, are found the theologians,—the Dominican monk St. Thomas Aquinas, who speaks the praises of St. Francis, and the Franciscan, St. Bonaventura, who speaks those of St. Dominic, in a manner repaying the courtesy of St. Thomas. This could not have been unintentional on the part of our Poet, who was satirical even in *Paradise*, and thus sharply rebuked the vain emulations between these two Orders, which were in his time new and very powerful. And both these (especially St. Thomas, who was a great favourite of Dante's) solve for Dante numerous questions in theology and in its sister science, philosophy; Beatrice joins them in this,—she here indeed becomes a theologian, but not Theology itself; for if she were so, Dante would not have needed the assistance of St. Thomas‡.

* *Paradiso*, c. 5-7.

† *Ibid.* c. 8-10.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 10-14.

In the fifth star, Mars, are the spirits of those who have fought for the faith, and among these the principal is that Cacciaguida, Dante's ancestor, who died in the crusade of the Emperor Conrad, in the middle of the twelfth century. Here come three whole cantos of mutual converse, rich in interest both to poetry and history, from which we have quoted so largely in the present work*. But Beatrice draws our Poet away from such earthly and sad recollections, making him turn to *Him who unburdens us from every wrong*†. Thus she, looking always at new brightness, and he gazing on her, mount to the sixth star, Jupiter, where they find the spirits of the great princes and rulers of nations; among them are Joshua and Charlemagne, besides many others; these, with their united splendour, form first the letters of the line *Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram*‡, and then the figure of an eagle, whose beak speaks in the name of all, unravels theological questions, and points out several of the great spirits of which it is formed§,—a strange fancy, and not a happy one. It is the third time that Dante returns to his beloved eagle; first in the complicated allegory at the end of the Purgatorio, and secondly in the story related about it at the beginning of the Paradiso, by Justinian; each time we find our Poet more warm in his wrath against the Guelfs whom he detests, than in his attachment to the Ghibellines whom he does

* Paradiso, c. 14-17.

† *Ibid.* c. 18, v. 6.

‡ "Love justice, ye who judge the earth." *Ibid.* c. 18, v. 91, 93.

§ Paradiso, c. 18-20.

not admire. From thence Dante flies with Beatrice to the last planet, Saturn, where he finds San Pier Damiano, St. Benedict, and other contemplative hermits*.

Three heavens alone remain now to be ascended, but they are the most sublime. We do not find in them any special class of blessed spirits, but choirs of saints and angels, among whom the imagination of the philosophic and Christian poet expatiates more than ever. In the lowest of these three, which is the eighth heaven of the fixed stars, he sees the triumph of Christ, followed by the Virgin Mary and an innumerable number of celestial spirits†. This image gives occasion to almost celestial poetry; but Dante then falls back on his accustomed disputations, which, if they please the studious from the importance of the questions treated in them, certainly annoy those who dislike to descend from lofty images to such subtleties. St. Peter, St. James, and St. John examine the poet on Faith, Hope, and Charity, and, as we have said, St. Peter crowns him‡. Adam reasons on his own fall, and finally St. Peter thunders in magnificent verses against the wicked shepherds of the Church§. Of these we have already quoted the finest.

The ninth heaven, or *Primum Mobile*, is the heaven of the Angels. In other places they are messengers or ministers,—here is their home. They are divided into nine choirs, and three hierarchies, the symbol of the

* Paradiso, c. 21, 22.

† *Ibid.* c. 23.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 24-26.

§ *Ibid.* c. 27.

Trinity ; no saint, no soul who has belonged to the earth, is here named, and theological descriptions and explanations are mixed up together, sometimes adorned with fancy, sometimes darkened by theological disquisitions, and sometimes by satires which stoop again to earth*. At last Dante is carried up to the Empyreum, where he contemplates new choirs, new dances, new figures, and perpetual triumphs of the most sublime souls and angels. He turns to question Beatrice as usual, and finds beside him, in her place, St. Bernard.

“ And where is she ? ” I sudden cried ;—when he :
 “ To end the longings of thy anxious state,
 By Beatrice impell'd I come to thee.
 In the third seat, and in the highest round,
 If thou look up, she will appear once more,
 Throned in the seat that her deserts have found.”
 I look'd above, and not a word replied ;
 And saw that she a beauteous chaplet wore,
 The eternal rays reflecting on each side.

Paradiso, c. 31, v. 64–72.

Then he addresses to her those tender prayers, which are as it were a compendium and last fruit of the whole poem, and indeed of his own life :—

“ O lady, upon whom my hopes are placed,
 And who, to work out my security,
 Hast left Hell's precincts with thy footsteps traced†.

* *Paradiso*, c. 27–29.

† Beatrice went down to Limbo to persuade Virgil to assist Dante. (Wright.)

For all the wondrous things that I have seen,
 My gratitude and praise are due to thee,
 By whom have grace and power accorded been.
 A slave before*, thou hast released me—thou,
 By every art and mode that could be tried,
 Didst win the freedom that I cherish now.
 Continue thy beneficence to me,
 So that my soul, which thou hast purified,
 May loose its mortal bonds, approved by thee."
 My prayer thus ended, she with smiling face
 Seem'd to behold me where she sate removed;
 Then turn'd unto the eternal Fount of Grace.

Paradiso, c. 31, v. 79-93.

But this is not the last time Beatrice is mentioned. The *Commedia* was a votive offering to her, and we find her again in the last canto of the *Paradiso*. At the death of Beatrice we mentioned a touching sign of her devotion to the Virgin Mary; and Dante, probably influenced by Beatrice, felt the same devotion. We should remember how Beatrice was sent by the Virgin to Dante's assistance, and how he alludes to the invocations of women in labour to Mary. Nor are these the only parts of the poem in which she is mentioned; thirty-eight times are reckoned, and these are not all†.

* The slavery from which Beatrice had released Dante was the slavery of his own passions. *Purg.* c. 30, v. 136. (Wright.)

† Index of the *Minerva* Edition.—*Purgatorio*, c. 3, v. 39; c. 5, v. 101; c. 8, v. 37; c. 10, v. 41, 50; c. 13, v. 50; c. 15, v. 88; c. 18, v. 100; c. 20, v. 19, 27; c. 22, v. 142; c. 33, v. 6.—*Paradiso*, c. 3, v. 122; c. 4, v. 80; c. 11, v. 71; c. 13, v. 84; c. 14, v. 36; c. 15, v. 133; c. 16, v. 35; c. 23, v. 88, 111, 126, 137; c. 25, v. 128; c. 31, v. 100, 116, 127; c. 32,

St. Bernard was, as we all know, especially devoted to the Virgin, and was chiefly instrumental in spreading her gentle worship in the preceding century. As Dante ascends no higher he no longer requires a guide, but the Saint points out to him the glories of the Virgin Mary, surrounded by the most sublime saints and angels arranged in the form of a rose. It is St. Bernard who makes this last prayer for Dante:—

O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son !
 Humblest, yet most exalted of our race,
 Forecast of counsel in the Eternal One,—
 Man's nature thou didst raise to such high station,
 That his Creator thought it no disgrace
 To veil His glory in His own creation.
 Within thy womb renew'd its ancient power
 That love, beneath whose vivifying glow,
 Put forth its buds in peace this blessed Flower*.
 Here unto us a mid-day torch thou art
 Of Charity ; and unto men below
 The living streams of Hope thou dost impart.
 Lady, so great art thou, and such thy might,
 That whoso grace desires, and asks not thee,
 Desire indulges ere prepared for flight.
 Thy kindness succoureth not him alone
 Who asks thy aid ; but oft spontaneously
 Foreruns the prayer, and is, unask'd for, shown.
 In thee dwells Mercy—Pity dwells in thee—
 In thee Munificence—in thee abounds
 What'er of Goodness may in creature be.

v. 4, 29, 85, 96, 104, 107, 113, 119, 134 ; c. 33, v. 1, 34.—Inferno, c. 2, v. 97, 124.

* The Rose of Blessed Spirits.

Now he*, who from the nethermost abyss
 Of all the world, hath in their several rounds
 Beheld the spirits, or of woe or bliss,
 Desires thy prayers, that through the ministration
 Of Grace he may exalt his eyes above,
 So as to view the height of his Salvation :
 And I, who for that glorious sight did ne'er
 Burn with more ardour than for him I prove,
 Urge all my prayers ; (and may they reach thine ear !)
 That by thy prayers thou wouldst dispel each cloud
 Of the mortality that dims his brow ;
 So unto him may God His face unshroud.
 And I again implore thee, glorious Queen,
 Who canst thy will perform, that henceforth thou
 Wouldst his affections guard—such vision seen.
 Aid him each earth-born impulse to withstand—
 See Beatrice, and see what numerous crowd
 Of saints assist my vows with clasped hand.

Paradiso, c. 33, v. 1-39.

Thus, with folded hands, and along with the most blessed spirits, praying to the Virgin for Dante, his Beatrice at last leaves him ;—it was thus she had appeared to him in the vision from whence originated the *Commedia*. He now hurries to the end of his poem with a few verses, which he acknowledges are inadequate to his great subject, the contemplation of the Deity. The Virgin Mary lowered

Those eyes so loved of God and so revered†,

* Dante, who, ascending from the abyss of Hell, had beheld the Spirits in Purgatory and Paradise. (Wright.)

† *Paradiso*, c. 33, v. 40.

at the entreaty of St. Bernard, as a sign that she had received his prayers, and then turned them to the Eternal Light. St. Bernard, smiling, made a signal to Dante to look upwards, but he had already anticipated the Saint's desire, and was gazing on and "consuming his sight" with God—three in one—until

The glorious Vision here *his* powers o'ercame*.

So concludes the sacred Poem, and with this poem is Dante's life concluded,—the life of the lover who had just fulfilled his vow of love; the life of the great Poet who had completed the work which had immortalized him; the life of the Christian in the last contemplation of the joys of Paradise and God. So joyous and peaceful an end it is scarcely possible to attribute to chance; it rather seems the natural result of a soul satisfied at having completed its task here below, or else the supernatural and almost miraculous gift of a rewarding Providence, who had designed to call to himself that strong and striving soul at the moment of victory, penitent for his errors, full of works, and ready for his reward.

* Paradiso, c. 33, v. 142.

CHAPTER XVI.

RAVENNA.—DANTE'S LAST RETREAT.—HIS LAST LABOURS.—HIS LAST EMBASSY.—HIS DEATH AND BURIAL.

1320—14TH SEPTEMBER, 1321.

I PRAY thee now, O Lord, that thou deign to show me the final end of my short life. Ah, do not cut me off in the midst of my days, but rather await the time and hour of my salvation.

Let me, Lord, issue from the tomb, not darkened and weighed down by sin, but spotless as a dove. Thus bright may I soar aloft, and dwell in that place which contains thy children and servants, where is joy and rejoicing for ever more.

Dante's Psalms. Psalm v., 24, 25, 29.

WE left Dante at Udine, at the Guelf court of the Patriarch Pagano della Torre, in the year 1319. On the 20th January, 1320, we find him at Verona, if we believe in the title of a little book printed at Venice in 1508, and which has been quoted by bibliographers; but I leave it to them to say, or rather I ask them, whether it be still in existence*.

* See Note E. at the end of the Chapter.

It would be necessary to see the work itself, to be able to form any plausible conjectures whether it ought to be added to the rest of Dante's works, and whether we can ascertain by it a sojourn of the poet at Mantua, and a third and fourth visit to Verona about the beginning of 1320, which would prove that the disputes between him and Cane had not produced a complete rupture.

At any rate, a little before or a little after this time Dante's residence at Ravenna must have begun. All his biographers mention it, without giving the exact time when he first took up his abode there*. Boccaccio would seem to fix it just after the death of Henry VII.; but this is too great a contradiction to all our other positive documents to be of any weight. Boccaccio continues in his usual style, giving more words than matter. "Ravenna," he says, "a most famous and ancient city of Romagna, had at that time for its lord a noble knight whose name was Guido Novello da Polenta, who, himself accomplished in all liberal studies, honoured highly men of worth, and especially those who surpassed others in learning. It having reached his ears that Dante was in Romagna and in distress, he, Guido, having long before known of his value by report, was now disposed to receive him, and to honour him in his forlorn condition: nor did he wait for a request to do thus." But Dante being invited accepted the invitation, and went to Ravenna, "where he was honourably received by the

* G. Villani, pp. 507, 508. Leon. Aret., Ediz. Miner. p. 58.

Prince, who revived his crushed hopes by kind and comforting words, and, giving him an abundance of needful things, kept him with him many years, even to the end of his life." And further on Boccaccio says: "Dante then dwelt in Ravenna many years under the protection of this gracious Prince, having lost all hopes of ever again returning to Florence, though he had not lost the desire. There, at Ravenna, by his lectures, he formed several scholars in poetry, and especially in the vulgar idiom, which, according to my opinion, he was the first to exalt and bring into estimation among us Italians, as Homer did among the Greeks and Virgil among the Latins*."

But beside Guido's liberality there was another cause which might have attracted Dante to Ravenna, his ancient intimacy with the family of Polenta. Guido, the father of Francesca, had, besides this daughter, three sons,—Bernardino (Dante's companion in arms at the battle of Campaldino), Ostasio, and Bannino. These had all three died before 1318, when Guido, surnamed Novello, the son of Bannino, held the government of Ravenna. The asylum this Guido offered, and so liberally granted the Poet, shows that he was far from being offended at the manner in which his aunt Francesca's guilt is related in the *Inferno*,—a guilt known to all, but for which that immortal episode first excited compassion.

* Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, pp. 38–40.

But another circumstance may still more precisely fix Dante's arrival at Ravenna. We have seen that he went to the court of Verona, either with or shortly after Uguccione della Faggiola, and that he held the office of judge* there, while Uguccione held that of captain; we have also seen how Dante resigned his undignified and unpleasing office and left Verona, while Uguccione remained in his, which suited him better. Though that fierce captain held the sword which everywhere imposes respect, he did not escape the jests of the buffoons of that court. "One day at table he was talking with pleasure of his youth, and of his great appetite. One of these cried out, 'No wonder, O Uguccione, for didst thou not devour at a single banquet the great cities of Pisa and Lucca?†'" Uguccione was very instrumental in making Cacciagnida Captain-general of the Ghibelline league, at the parliament of Soncino, in 1318‡. After a few months had elapsed, and after they had made several expeditions together, the peace with Padua was broken, and they both laid siege to it; here Uguccione died on the 5th of August, 1319, from a sickness caught in the marshes§. We will leave his praises to his biographer, and we almost wish we could disbelieve that a friendship existed between him and Dante. But the proofs of it seeming to us only too clear, it is not improbable that

* By Judges here must be understood those persons who presided in the subordinate courts under the Podestà. (TRANSL.)

† Veltro, p. 163.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 169.

§ *Ibid.* p. 172.

Dante may have been led to Ravenna after the death of Ugucione, to find there his sister Giovanna della Faggiola, the wife or widow of Saladino degli Onesti, with her daughters Catalina and Agnesina*.

All other documents agree with Boccaccio, that Dante was treated by Guido da Polenta liberally and courteously; and Guido, not less than Pagano della Torre, was a Guelf, which is an additional proof that Dante had at last learned to associate with those of an opposite party. That he hoped through the protection of either of them to be restored to his country does not seem probable, for he attacks the Florentine rulers and the Popes in the last cantos of the *Paradiso*, and besides this it is asserted by Boccaccio that Dante despaired of ever returning; and if there had been any proposal at that time that he should be restored to his native city, we should have had it mentioned either by Boccaccio or Villani, or some of the other Florentine historians, who all afterwards blushed that their great fellow-citizen should thus have died in exile. That Dante should be indebted to Guelfs for an asylum may be attributed perhaps to the courtesy of his hosts being superior to their party spirit; and the exiled partisan, who could not submit to the rudeness that he met with at the Ghibelline court of Can Grande, may have become temperate when he was treated with courtesy, though his hosts were Guelfs. We know too well that courtiers behave

* Veltro, pp. 21, 175.

to every one as their prince does. Dante, who was particularly liable to receive outward impressions, and who says of himself,—

To change by nature prone,
And varying still with each impression made*,—

Dante, wearied perhaps and old, and with a more than ever Christian spirit, probably appeased his wrath, and that proneness to quarrel of which he is accused by Boccaccio; or if he did not himself become moderate, he must have been tolerated as a great man by these two princes, and by the courtiers as a favourite with their sovereigns.

Dante made Ravenna his fixed and lasting abode. His son Pietro came thither from Verona, called to Ravenna perhaps to act as a judge; and we find that he was a settled resident in the contrada of Santa Maria in Zenzanigola and Santo Stefano in Muro, as we find him required on the 5th of January, 1321, to provide for the Archbishop of Bologna, who was visiting the vacant church of Ravenna †. Dante's second son Jacopo also came there, if we give credit, as we should do, to Boccaccio, when he tells us of the discovery of the thirteen last cantos of the *Commedia* ‡. To Gemma, Dante's wife, we find no allusion made by him, nor the slightest record of her, after the recovery of the papers in 1306; so we cannot tell whether she was still living at Florence, or

* *Paradiso*, c. 5, v. 98, 99.

† *Veltro*, p. 180.

‡ See Chapter XVII.

whether she survived her husband. But with respect to Dante's silence regarding her, we must observe that he maintained the same reserve with regard to his numerous children, to his father, to his mother, who had brought him up with so much affection, to all his relations, and we may say generally to his whole domestic life. Was this out of contempt, or out of respect? At any rate it was common to them all, and nothing especial on this account can be inferred against the too much abused Gemma. Why should not we rather suppose that this reserve was occasioned by that dislike which every delicate mind must feel to speak publicly of himself, and still more of the persons that are dear and near to him? A passionate love, which makes one consider the beloved object as single on earth and a miracle of the world, might have induced Dante to speak of Beatrice to the *princes of the earth*, and to present and future ages; but, except in this case, it was natural that he should maintain his usual reserve and modest silence. That Dante watched over the education of his children as much as the calamities of exile rendered possible, leaving the rest of this charge to his wife (who probably on that account remained in her native city), we have already seen recorded in different places; that he delighted in their society we see here; and we shall find that his sons were not ungrateful, and devoutly cherished the memory of their father*. Nevertheless Petrarch (I grieve for him

* See Chapter XVII.

and not for Dante) thus writes in one of his letters: -
 "My father, after his exile yielding to fortune, gave himself up to the education of his children; whereas he, Dante, opposing it by strong resolution, perseverance, and love of glory, was not diverted from his object, but preferred it to all other cares. Neither the iniquity of his fellow-citizens, nor his affection to his wife or children, availed to withdraw him from his studies and from poetry, which usually desires shade, quiet, and silence*."
 "These," adds Foscolo very properly, "are praises to a poet, and indirect and most severe accusations against a father, and they are not true." Thus we find Dante accused by one of the two great writers of his century, Boccaccio, of having allowed himself to be diverted by marriage from the pursuits of philosophy†; and by the other, Petrarch, of having on account of his studies neglected his wife and children. And Dante did neither the one nor the other; he evidently always first attended to the calls of active life, of his family, and country; and only after these to those of study and contemplative life. His great mind enabled him to attend to both. Little minds did not understand him; the servile herd calumniated him; Foscolo deserves praise for protecting him against calumny and envy.

Nor had Dante only his sons with him at Ravenna; he was there consoled by several friends. Among these are recorded Ser Piero, Messer Giardino of Ravenna,

* Petrarcha, Ep.

† See Vol. I. Chapter VIII.

Ser Dino Perini, a Florentine, and Fiduccio de' Milotti, a physician of Certaldo*. He also corresponded as a neighbour with Giovanni da Virgilio, the most celebrated Latin poet of the day, living at Bologna, of which he was a citizen. We have two Latin eclogues of his composition addressed to Dante, in which he exhorted him to abandon the Italian language, and like him to write poetry in Latin; he suggested to him for subjects the death of Henry of Luxemburg, the victories of Can Grande, the life of Ugucione, so fatal to the Guelfs, the destruction of the armies of the House of Anjou, and the wars of Liguria (perhaps those of the Malaspinas, to whom Dante was so much attached). "But before and above all things come," he said, "O master, to Bologna, there to receive the laurel crown†." And in his second eclogue, pressing him still further, he promises to make him acquainted with the verses of Mussato, whom Dante probably had known personally in Verona or Udine. "But thy Guido," he added, "will not suffer thee to leave Ravenna, nor the beautiful pine forest that borders the Adriatic." Dante replied to these eager and courteous expressions with two other eclogues in the same language; so far, but no further, gratifying the Latinist, who perhaps was ignorant that a dead language would be fetters to a Dante; he had already attempted and rejected as impossible the restoration of the Latin language. "It would be pleasing to him," Dante replied,

* Veltro, p. 180.

† *Ibid.* p. 182.

“to have his head crowned with laurel at Bologna; but it would be better still that he might once again return to his country, and it would not matter then under what leaves he should conceal his hoary locks. When by his verses the heavenly bodies passing round our world, and the inhabitants of these stars, should be known like the kingdoms of the earth, then would he rejoice to bind his temples with ivy and laurel.” Here we perceive that Dante must have already finished the composition of his *Paradiso*, but had not yet published it,—that he was exhorted by his friends to undertake some other subject, and that there had been a proposal to bestow upon him the poetic crown. If I am not mistaken, this crowning of a poet would have been a new thing, and perhaps imagined by Dante himself, either in imitation of the laurel crowns given for various sciences, which he had seen conferred in several of the Universities, or chiefly as a compensation and reparation for the indignity intended to be offered to him in San Giovanni; and on that account he wished to be crowned in that edifice, and in no other place. “He delighted greatly in honour and pomp,” says Boccaccio, “and perchance more than befitted his lofty virtues. . . . and on account of his delight in these, I believe that above every other study he preferred poetry, seeing that, as philosophy excels all others in nobility, its excellence can be communicated to but few, and those few only the most renowned of the world, while poetry is apparent and delightful to every

one, and poets are very rare*. And therefore through poetry, hoping to attain the *unusual* and pompous honour of being crowned with the laurel, he gave himself up entirely to it, studying and composing. And certainly his desires would have been fulfilled had fortune been gracious to him, and had he ever been permitted to return to Florence; and *only* in her, over the baptismal font of San Giovanni, did he desire to be crowned; in order that there, where he had received his first name in baptism, there in the same place he should receive at his coronation a second name†. But so it happened that though his attainments were great, and he might, owing to them, wherever he pleased have received the honour of the laurel, he would not accept it; and so without this much desired honour he died‡." This *unusual* honour, so sought by Dante, for I believe a very special reason, was a very few years afterwards sought and obtained by Petrarch (less scrupulous in every way), from the hand of that very King Robert whom Dante so much despised. Thus might perhaps have arisen Petrarch's jealousy; for there is nothing from which jealousy so easily springs as from looking into ourselves,

* O good Boccaccio! pardon me for saying that thou hast here ill understood Dante, since thou believest him to be a poet from such calculating and vain motives.

† This is evidently a translation of the first verses of the twenty-fifth canto of the *Paradiso*.

‡ Boccaccio, *Vita*, pp. 39, 40.

after having obtained honours, and finding ourselves inferior to those who have not obtained them.

Cecco of Ascoli, an indifferent poet, who was afterwards one of Dante's detractors, seems to have corresponded with him at Ravenna, and proposed an absurd question to him, which was the noblest of two twin sons? It is further related that Dante supported this question against Cecco, that art could conquer nature, and, having to prove it, taught a cat to hold a candle; Cecco disproved the truth of the argument by suddenly letting out some mice*. If these tales are true, they prove that Dante knew how to converse with all, according as he estimated them, and that he had a just estimation of Cecco. Some add, that he had been Dante's master in astronomy, but I do not find old authority for this belief; and, without good authority, it would be difficult for me to be persuaded that Cecco's subtle but false wit could have educated on any point Dante's clear understanding. I should have rather supposed, as they lived about the same time, that Cecco had been Dante's disciple; but if he had ever been so, he was an indocile and an ungrateful one, as we shall see.

But besides this social intercourse, his correspondence and his eclogues, Dante was engaged on very different occupations from those to which he was encouraged by Giovanni da Virgilio to devote himself. A varied and versatile genius like his cannot be understood by the many,

* Pelli, p. 84.

and often not even by his friends ; and while these, judging of Dante by his past life, suggested, supposing them to be agreeable to him, subjects expressive of party spirit and indignant scorn, he, the Christian Dante, took his solitary way, with his thoughts raised toward heaven, and ever rising to loftier regions as he advanced in years, translated the seven Penitential Psalms, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the Ten Commandments, the seven mortal Sins ; and these his last verses, which are now known by the name of Dante's Creed, have this beginning in imitation of Virgil, afterwards still more happily imitated by Petrarch :—

“ I have already written many times regarding love, in the sweetest, most beautiful, and graceful rhymes I was able, and I exerted all my powers to refine them. They no longer satisfy my desires, for I know I have often vainly expended my labours, and have been ill repaid. I will now withdraw my hand from writing any longer on this false love, but will discourse on God as befits a Christian.”

Verses less deserving of attention from their intrinsic merits than for the pure feeling they express, and for the answer that is given in them to Dante's ancient or modern calumniators.

The translation or paraphrase of the Seven Psalms is not certainly distinguished for that native genius which shines in Dante's original works, but it catches in some degree the spirit of David's poetry, the only

poetry that is more sublime than Dante's, and the only poetry which has not been imitated, and which perhaps is well fitted to be imitated in after ages. The seven Penitential Psalms are, as every one knows, a continual appeal to the mercy of God, and thus conduce to the consolation of all penitent Christians, but especially to those who have, or believe themselves to have, suffered here below from the injustice of men, from whom they appeal with resignation to the justice of God; and especially to those who with hope desire the dear ones they have lost, on which account our compassionate mother the Church suggests these Psalms to them. Dante therefore, strongly imbued with these two feelings, must have much delighted in them. He often adds words which evidently refer to his own life, sins, and pursuits; and his poetry, although a translation, is sometimes happy. It has been said that he wrote these religious poems to defend himself from ecclesiastical persecutions; but there is no historical record of any such persecution of Dante during his lifetime, and let us judge whether such defence was necessary to him, when he could bring forward equally strong passages in a religious point of view, and in far superior poetry, from the *Divina Commedia*.

Such were Dante's thoughts, such were his occupations, when they were interrupted by the last circumstance that we know relating to him. Villani mentions that he was sent by the Lord of Polenta on an embassy

to Venice. This charge was more suited to the offices he had previously held than the situation of Judge given him by Can Grande, nor do I see any reason to doubt the fact which was received by all his biographers; but we must at least be allowed to correct the date of a letter of Dante's printed by Doni as written from Venice to Guido Novello, in March, 1313, and to alter it to 1320 or 1321; for it is improbable that Dante could have been at Ravenna in 1313, and it is also certain that that city was not then governed by Guido Novello. But the whole letter is justly considered spurious, not so much on account of its excessive severity against the Venetians, for that would have accorded with Dante's character, but because, besides bearing on its face the marks of forgery, it has never been found in any manuscript, and was published by Doni, who has a bad reputation for veracity. It is said that Dante, not being able to attain the object that Guido had in view when he sent him on his embassy, returned to Ravenna, and falling sick from mortification died. This would be difficult to believe in a man who had been tried by so many misfortunes; however, fortitude varies not only in different men, but in the same men at different times; and one who has resisted great misfortunes, may have been so weakened by them as to be overcome by a less one.

Dante at any rate returned from his embassy, and Boccaccio continues thus:—"Since the allotted hour

comes to all, he having already passed, or been near entering, his fifty-sixth year, fell sick; and having humbly and devoutly received, according to the Christian religion, every ecclesiastical sacrament, and as a man reconciled himself with God, by contrition for those things committed against His will, in the month of September, in the year of Christ 1321, on the day that our Church celebrates the exaltation of the Holy Cross*, he rendered up his wearied spirit to his Creator, not without the greatest sorrow to the above-mentioned Guido, and to all the citizens of Ravenna generally. There can be no doubt but that he was received into the arms of his most noble Beatrice, with whom in the presence of Him who is the supreme God, having laid aside the miseries of this present life, he now joyfully lives in that felicity which awaits no end."

The Franciscan authors add, that Dante at Ravenna had become a member of their Tertiary Order†, that he

* The 14th of September.

† The Franciscans and Dominicans admitted into their communities a third class of members (besides the professed Friars and Nuns), called the Tertiary Order, or Third Order of Penitence. It included both sexes, and all ranks of life; the members were not bound by vows, nor were they required to quit their secular occupations and domestic duties, though they entered into an obligation to renounce secular pleasures and vanities, to make restitution where they had done wrong, to be true and just in all their dealings, to be charitable to the extent of their means, and never to take up weapon except against the enemies of Christ. Louis IX. is said to have belonged to the Third Order of Franciscans. (Mrs. Jameson's Monastic Orders.)

died in their habit, and was therefore buried among them. The first two circumstances were common acts of devotion in that age,—the third only is certain, that he was buried with them.

Thus died Dante, an unhappy man even in his youth, owing to the loss of his mistress, unhappy in the services he desired to render his country, misunderstood by his fellow-citizens, condemned to the stake, his writings lost, persecuted on account of them, his studies interrupted, an exile, a wanderer, in poverty, perhaps a beggar, a solitary man, the scorn of buffoons, the sport of princes; but Dante never stooped to meanness, he never deviated from his faith, he never ceased to the end to love, to labour, and to write, for his mistress, his country, and his God. He leaves us a great example. Times may change, and the difficulties we meet with may differ from those that he encountered; but even if they were greater, which is not the case, still the constitution of human minds does not alter, nor Heaven's grace to support them. Whoever acts cannot avoid errors, but he errs no less who through timidity abstains from action; and there is this great difference between the former and the latter: the man who errs out of an excess of activity will have his errors corrected by posterity, and what he has done well remains among the treasures of his country and of mankind; whereas the idle man differs little from the brute, and leaves nothing behind him. It is certain that our Heavenly Father, who even from the beginning

imposed labour, and afterwards explained that every man must multiply the talent that is bestowed on him, will especially reward, whatever may be the fruit, whoever has laboured to obey His divine precepts. To great geniuses belongs glory here below, but every man of good will may earn eternal glory.

And at least in this great, this important and patriotic virtue of industry, which has done so much for Italy, we may every one of us imitate Dante. Genius cannot be imitated at all, or but badly, but the virtues can always be imitated, and this one especially, which is the mother of all the rest. There never perhaps will be another, who will be able to leave his country a treasure of thought and glory equal to what Dante has left her, but let us each add our mite.

As regards glory, the especial reward reserved for the great, let us see what he thought of it, and what fell to his share.

NOTE E.

THIS is the title of the book: "*Quaestio florulenta, ac perutilis de duobus elementis aquae et terrae tractans super reperta, quae olim Mantuae auspicata, Veronae vero disputata, et decisa ac manu propria scripta a Dante florentino poeta clarissimo quae diligenter et accurate correctae fuit per Rev. Magistrum Joannem Benedictum Moncettum de Castilione Aretino regentem Patavinum ordinis Eremitarum divi Augustini, sacraeque theologiae doctorem excellentissimum.*"

(Tiraboschi, *Ed. Minerva*, tom. v. p. 82.)

CHAPTER XVII.

DANTE'S FAME.

1321-1338.

Nought but a gust of wind is worldly fame,
 Now from this quarter, now from that arriving,
 And bearing with each change a different name.
 Think'st thou thy glory will be less or more,
 Whether thou'dst died among thy toys, or old
 Thou shuffle off thy mortal coil, before
 A thousand years are past—a shorter space,
 If 'gainst eternity its sum be told,
 Than wink of eye to orbs of slowest pace?

Purgatorio, c. 11, v. 100-108.

WHOEVER compares the above quotation from the *Purgatorio*, in which earthly glory is estimated at its proper value, with that passage from the *Inferno*, c. 24, v. 47*,

* "Now must thou shake off sloth," my guide began ;
 "For not beneath rich canopies of state,
 On beds of down, must fame be sought by man.
 He who descends unhonour'd to the grave,
 Leaves of himself on earth such vestige slight
 As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave."

in which it is so highly exalted, will add Dante to the number of those great men, who, when they commenced their earthly career, rested all their affections and hopes on glory, but when they had reached the pinnacle of greatness, considered it only as vanity and vexation of spirit. Some we find proud when they compare themselves with others, but humble when their thoughts dwell on themselves; and such was Dante's pride, of which he has been too often accused. I should rather call him modest, when he considers himself as inferior to Ovid, and, in the passage we have quoted above, does not seem to reckon on so much as a thousand years of glory. More than five hundred years have elapsed since he lived, and his fame has acquired fresh lustre. At any rate I will submit to Dante's own maxim, and what I relate of his glory shall only be in reference to his usefulness and the activity he has promoted. This alone is the real legacy of the great.

Therefore my readers must not be surprised if I pass hastily over the funeral ceremonies performed in honour of him by Guido da Polenta*, the sermon pronounced on the return to his house, the poems and epitaphs written on his death†; the sepulchre at Ravenna designed by Guido, but not executed till 1483 by Bernardo, the father of Cardinal Bembo, and Prior at Ravenna for the Venetian

* Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 41.

† Veltro, p. 187.

Republic*; the monuments erected to him in various places, especially the one at Rome, by Canova, in 1818, and that at Florence, first decreed in 1896, but not executed until 1829†: lastly, the medals struck in his honour‡.

And although more truly belonging to him, we do not mean to dwell upon the works of art he inspired, and which were executed by Giotto, Orcagna, Masaccio, and that kindred and almost brother-spirit, Michael Angelo Buonarrotti, who made sketches for each canto of the *Commedia*, which were, alas! lost in a shipwreck: we pass over also the designs of Federigo Zuccari, Flaxman, Pinelli, and many others. No poet or author, except perhaps Homer, has inspired to the same degree as Dante the painter and sculptor.

We shall also pass over hastily the account of Dante's family; they were at Ravenna at the time of his death; but probably at the expulsion of Guido, which took place soon after, they returned to Can Grande at Verona, where they settled and increased. Few of his descendants ever returned to Florence, and the direct

* It was restored, both in 1692 and 1780, by the Cardinals Corsi and Valenti Gonzaga, the Pope's Legates in that city. (Pelli, p. 144. *De Romanis*, Ed. Min. v. 121, e Francesco Beltrami, forestiere istrutto delle cose notabilissime della città di Ravenna: Rav. 1783.)

† Missirini, *Commentario* II., gives an account of all the monuments erected in Tuscany. Others might be added in other parts of Italy, besides one that has lately been executed by Mademoiselle Faveau for the Palais Portales in Paris.

‡ Pelli, p. 150. Missirini, *Com.* II. p. 16.

male line ended in the middle of the sixteenth century in Ginevra, who transferred the name and the blood of the Alighieri into the family of the Counts Sarego, which is still in existence*. A descent from a man like Dante is real nobility; but passing over all this, and his minor works, we hasten to direct our whole attention to that great monument he built and bequeathed to us, the source of so much poetical inspiration in others,—his *Divina Commedia*. We shall however only give a summary of its subsequent history; a full account of it would be little less than the whole literary history of Italy.

We have seen that the last thirteen cantos of the *Paradiso* were written only a short time before Dante's death, that they had not been sent to Can Grande, and were thus unpublished. Boccaccio relates that Dante died without even leaving any notice of them. "And those friends he left behind him, his sons and his disciples, having searched at many times and for several months everything of his writing, to see whether he had left any conclusion to his work, could find in nowise any of the remaining cantos; his friends generally being much mortified that God had not at least lent him so long to the world, that he might have been able to complete the small remaining part of his work; and having sought so long and never found it, they remained in despair. Jacopo and Piero were sons of Dante, and each

* Pelli, p. 37. Genealogical Table, p. 28. See also Note F, at the end of the Chapter. (TRANSL.)

of them being rhymers*, they were induced by the persuasions of their friends to endeavour to complete, as far as they were able, their father's work, in order that it should not remain imperfect; when to Jacopo, who was more eager about it than his brother, there appeared a wonderful vision, which not only induced him to abandon such presumptuous folly, but showed him where the thirteen cantos were, which were wanting to the *Divina Commedia*, and which they had not been able to find†." Boccaccio goes on to relate this vision, which appeared to Jacopo eight months after Dante's death, and is recorded by one of his disciples, an honest citizen of Ravenna, named Pier Giardino. Boccaccio, by adding this vision, takes away in some degree the authority of the story; but, leaving out that which is evidently false, we may, I think, retain our belief in the rest. The interruption of Dante's friendship with Cane naturally accounts for his not sending his last cantos to him, and they were consequently not published; which last circumstance is confirmed by the eclogue, or letter, to Giovanni da Virgilio. Dante's exile and misfortunes must naturally have rendered him suspicious, and he might on that account have concealed the rest of the precious manuscript; the shortness of his last illness, the serious and sincere religious thoughts which must have engrossed him at that time, might explain his silence regarding the

* Thou art to be praised, great Boccaccio, for distinguishing between Italian rhymers and poets.

† Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, p. 89. See Note G, at the end of this Chapter. (TRANSL.)

place in which he had deposited these papers; perhaps, too, some return of Christian charity, which softens vindictive feelings,—and even the sternness of justice, might have contributed to his silence: the lost manuscript might have been afterwards discovered, through one of those confused day or night dreams, which sometimes appear like supernatural inspirations. But whether we will accept or not Boccaccio's version of the story, two certain facts appear to result from it;—that the whole poem was published at Dante's death, with the exception of the last thirteen cantos; and that these last were sent to Can Grande by Dante's sons, and were published a few months, or perhaps a year, after the death of the Poet; for neither Jacopo, Pier Giardino, nor Boccaccio could have dared to assert these, had they not been true and well-known facts.

Boccaccio mentions another important circumstance concerning another of Dante's works, the *Monarchia*. "This book," says he, "many years after the death of the author, was condemned by Messer Beltramo, Cardinal del Poggetto, the Pope's Legate in Lombardy, the reigning Pope being John XXII. And the cause was this: because Louis, Duke of Bavaria, being elected King of the Romans by the Electors of Germany, and coming to his coronation at Rome, against the will of the said Pope John, when he reached Rome he chose, contrary to ecclesiastical ordinances, a Minor Friar, called Fra Pietro della Cornara, to be Pope, and appointed many

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Cardinals and Bishops; and there, by this Pope, he caused himself to be crowned. And as his authority was called in question on many grounds, he and his followers found out this book in defence of it*, and began to make use of many of the arguments they found in it. For which reason the book, *which till then had been scarcely known*, became very famous. But the said Louis having returned into Germany, he and his followers, and especially the clergy, having fallen from power, and having been dispersed, the said Cardinal (there being no one to oppose him in this) had the said book publicly condemned to be burnt, as containing heretical matters. And he tried to do the same with the bones of the author, to the eternal infamy and confusion of his name, had he not been opposed in this by a valiant and noble Florentine knight, whose name was Pino della Tosa, who was at Bologna when these things were transacting; and along with him Messer Astigo da Polenta†, and they were both very powerful in the eyes of the above-named Cardinal‡.

These propositions of the Monarchia, and Dante's letter to the King of Italy, were condemned by the Council of Trent§.

But returning to the Commedia, the great work that

* The Monarchia was dedicated to Louis of Bavaria.

† That is, Messer Ostagio da Polenta.

‡ Boccaccio, Vita di Dante, p. 94.

§ De Rom. Ed. Min. v. 114.

reflected glory on all Dante's other writings;—scarcely had it been published, than it excited a universal admiration quite unexampled in that age, and in every other, whether ancient or modern. We have in a former chapter related the anecdote of the woman at Verona, which shows that those passages of the *Inferno*, which had been published during the Poet's lifetime, had even then acquired popularity. Villani, who never mentions any other author of his day, interrupts his history to relate Dante's death; and the manuscript copies of the *Commedia* belonging to the fourteenth century*, which are so numerous in all the libraries of Italy, France, Germany, and England, give us a tangible proof how this work had been diffused†. I do not believe that there are as many manuscripts belonging to that century of the writings of all the other ancient and modern authors put together. The most ancient commentary is perhaps the one attributed to Dante's son Pietro, and in a short time followed, about the middle of the century, those of Buti, Jacopo della Lana, Benvenuto da Imola, and Boccaccio. There were written, about the same time, perhaps by Jacopo, another of Dante's sons, or by Messer Busone Raffaelli da Gubbio, his friend and host, and by

* The oldest manuscript is dated 1336?

† See on these ancient manuscripts Pelli, pp. 40, 162, 170, 171. A catalogue of these manuscripts is desirable, and if possible a description of them, distinguishing those which have been investigated. It is well known that Karl Witte, the deserving editor of Dante's letters, has been for many years occupied on this labour in *Germany*!

others, numerous abstracts, and almost commentaries in Italian and Latin verse*; even at that time, or a very little later, translations were made of the *Commedia* into Latin and French†. A French author mentions (and he must refer to the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century), "that Dante's *Commedia* was represented in France in the same manner as the rhapsodists of ancient Greece used to go through the cities and towns representing the *Iliad*, making one of the singers speak the part of the poet, and the others those of the personages he introduces‡."

But he who above all was the greatest means of spreading Dante's fame, was unquestionably the good, the courteous, the unenvious Boccaccio. He passionately delighted in his writings from his youth, and this passion must have begun soon after Dante's death; he wrote his life, in which there are many faults in style, such as too much declamation and a superfluity of words, with comparatively few facts; there is also scarcely anything in it relating to politics, and what there is, is erroneous; but for the details, which show the reality of Dante's love for Beatrice, it ought to be held in high estimation, as it is the only life of the Poet, written by one very nearly his contemporary. Boccaccio perhaps also wrote one of those abstracts of the *Commedia* in verse to which

* Pelli, pp. 41, 171, 174.

† One of these translations, without the name of an editor, is in the Royal Library of Turin.

‡ *Biblioth. des Romans*, tom. iv. 111, parte i. p. 6, cit. by Pelli, p. 177.

we have alluded, and he transcribed with his own hand a copy of the whole poem, which he sent with a letter to Petrarch*; the latter wrote an answer, which his admirers are determined to maintain to be spurious, but which has proved to be but too genuine†, and shows that envy in him which we have already remarked. We will not dwell on this envy, out of respect to the *second* father of our language; but we may with pleasure observe the devotion of the *third*, Boccaccio, to the *first*, Dante; and of this we have many interesting tokens. In 1350, the State of Florence bestowed "ten florins of gold on Messer Giovanni di Boccaccio, in order that he might give them to Sister Beatrice, who was Dante Alighieri's daughter and a nun in the monastery of San Stefano dell' Uliva, at Ravenna‡." So through his daughter, and the name of Beatrice, Dante received the first honours that his city, till then so thankless, had bestowed upon him. Through the agency doubtless of Boccaccio, a decree was promulgated on the 3rd of August, 1373, to elect and pay for a lecturer or professor of the *Divina Commedia* for one year, and Boccaccio himself was elected. On Sunday, the 3rd of October, of the same year, he began to read it in the Church of Santo Stefano, which is near the Ponte Vecchio§. It was during these lectures that he made the Commentary which we possess of the *Inferno*,

* Pelli, pp. 171, 173.

† *Ibid.* p. 184.

‡ Book of Entry of the year 1350. Pelli, p. 45.

§ Pelli, p. 167.

from the beginning, to the seventeenth verse of the seventeenth canto, and this was probably Boccaccio's last work, as he died in 1375. These lectures must have been often repeated, and favourably listened to, when two such popular names as Dante and Boccaccio were united. And they were continued after the death of their founder, on feast-days and in various parts of the city; first by Benvenuto da Imola, a scholar of Boccaccio's, and later still by Filippo Villani and Francesco Filelfo, Dante's biographers, and by other men distinguished in letters*. In a short time the custom thus so honourably introduced into Florence spread throughout Italy. The *Divina Commedia* was publicly read about 1385, in Pisa, by its commentator, Francesco da Buti, and afterwards by others; not long after this it was read in Piacenza, Milan, and Venice†. In 1396, the generation which had known, hated, feared, or envied Dante, having all passed away, the Florentine Republic endeavoured to obtain the remains of the Poet, and decreed him a sepulchre. But Ravenna refusing to give up his bones, the plan of building a monument was abandoned; nor was it executed until 1829, and it does not even now contain his ashes‡.

Thus during the whole of the fourteenth century, in which our beautiful language acquired its present form, no author was studied to the same extent as Dante. As regards the two other fathers of our language, Boccaccio

* Pelli, p. 168.

† *Ibid.* pp. 169-171.

‡ Missirini, *Com.* II. pp. 19, etc.

we have seen professing himself to be his pupil, and Petrarch, though not professing this, often imitating him. Petrarch failed when he attempted to rival the *Commedia*, but he perhaps excelled Dante in the delicate grace of his fugitive poems, and this superiority ought to have satisfied him. These three great writers, who all belonged to the fourteenth century, are the only modern authors before the invention of printing who are now considered as classical, and, like the ancients, are held up by public opinion as models for imitation. But while Petrarch and Boccaccio offer too easy models for unworthy copyists, Dante, amid his lofty clouds, is beyond the reach of the servile herd. He had however two imitators even in the fourteenth century, Fazio degli Uberti, in the *Dittamondo*, and that Cecco of Ascoli, whom we have seen in correspondence with him, and contending with him in philosophical disputations; he wrote in *terza rima* an Italian poem appropriately entitled *L'Acervo*, or *Mucchio*, or *Zibaldone**, though it is not without playfulness; it contains a bitter attack upon Dante. Cecco d'Ascoli, who was thus heretical in literature, was also accused of being so in religion, and as such was burnt at Florence about 1327†.

The fifteenth century, as is well known, was a century in which the liberties of Italy were undermined and lost,—a century in which she might have both recovered order and formed confederations, for she was left more

* *Acervo*, from the Latin *Acervus*, means a *confused heap*.

† Pelli, p. 83, etc.

in tranquillity by the Emperors, and the Guelph and Ghibelline parties were almost extinguished; but she was unfortunately distracted by the divisions of the Church and by rude passions, which were stronger than her new-born civilization; thus the only governments she possessed were the power one city had acquired over another, and that of little tyrants over the cities, all submitting to the oppressions of the *Condottieri*. These last were more than anything else the destruction of Italy, causing the Italians to neglect the use of arms, and thus yielding them an easy prey to various strangers, who foreseeing the result hastened to avail themselves of it. Thus the political history of the fifteenth century was a nullity; it was one of those centuries which are bad imitators of preceding ones, and such also was its literature. It did not give us a man or a book that may be called truly great*. Though Petrarch and Boccaccio were more imitated, Dante was not the less idolized, and commentaries on his works continued to be written; among these the principal is that of Cristoforo Landino. Leonardo Aretino, Filicfo, and others wrote lives of him, all short ones, taken from Boccaccio, and scarcely adding any facts or criticism. But this was the century of one of those inventions, made almost accidentally,

* Count Balbo seems unjust to the fifteenth century. The reason why that age contributed nothing original to Italian literature, probably was, that all the greatest intellects of Italy were then absorbed by the newly-revived study of the writings of classical antiquity, and doubtless at the time, this was the most useful path they could have chosen.
(TRANSL.)

and improved on by degrees, one scarcely knows by whom,—an invention that appears less the production of the human intellect than an immediate creation of God, who advances the interests of the human race by ways only known to Himself. No man, however great, can boast of having done a hundredth part as much for the advancement of the human race, as has been done by the invention of printing. Its beneficial effects, great as they were towards the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, made a sensible though slow progress through the three following centuries; but in our own times they have been multiplied to an enormous extent, by some slight mechanical improvements that have been added to the original invention. It would be difficult now to foretell what will be the ultimate effect of this wide diffusion of books by the means of printing, so different a state of things from what existed among the civilized ancients, or in the age of Dante. To no author's fame has it contributed as much as to his. There are nineteen or twenty editions of his poem in the fifteenth century, and I do not believe there are as many of any other ancient or modern writer; of the Bible alone there are more.

With the invention of printing closes the Middle Age, and begins the modern condition of Europe. In Italy, as in other countries, the sixteenth century was the time in which antiquated rules and abuses were destroyed, and new ones introduced. And Italy especially was dis-

turbed by a fresh influx of foreigners, by confusion, oppression, and immorality; but at the same time she was distinguished for elegance and refinement. The literature she fostered, spread among the nations which had come in arms to seek for it, and thus in the sixteenth century, Dante's glory was increased and diffused. We find in it forty editions of the *Divina Commedia*, and various new commentaries and examinations of the text, by Manetti, Sansovino, Vellutello, Daniello, Dolce, and the *Accademia della Crusca*; of this last it was one of the first and principal labours. Not a few of these editions, and several translations, were published out of Italy. The great men of that age were more especially students of Dante. Macchiavelli indeed could neither be an imitator, nor a commentator, nor even a biographer. But whether it was a coincidence of opinions, or a similar turn of mind, or whatever the cause, certainly in his ideas relating to Italy no writer was more a follower of our Poet, or at least more in conformity with him. The name of Ghibelline had passed away, but not its spirit, which will never be extinguished except with the extinction of its cause, and Macchiavelli was essentially a Ghibelline; he was equally with Dante an enemy to the Popes, less friendly than he to religion, and one wrapt up in the dream of a universal Italian Monarchy, no longer under the Emperor, but under whatsoever prince or tyrant should be able to establish it. This Ghibelline spirit with which they were both imbued, was a great misfor-

tune, for they had weight to misdirect the opinions, the hopes, and the strength of Italy.

In Ariosto's writings, which are entirely free from politics, we can only observe poetical imitations; they appear to me many, but I will leave this to philologists. We cannot say that Tasso imitated Dante much, and yet we have proofs of his having long, and closely studied him, by the numerous remarks written by him on the *Convito*, from whence he perhaps derived his allegories, which are too numerous and far-fetched. But of all the great men of the sixteenth century, there was none who resembled Dante in his genius and cast of thought, equally with Michael Angelo. Nor need we deeply regret his lost designs for the *Commedia*. All his works are Dantesque, especially the Sistine Chapel, and most of all his *Last Judgement*, in which the terrible painter has introduced not only Charon and his bark, but his own enemies among the damned. And whoever allows for the change of the times, will find that even the life of Michael Angelo had a great resemblance to that of Dante.

Italy had, from the unfortunate events of the two preceding centuries, fallen in the seventeenth into the lowest state of servitude and degradation, and of public and private immorality; her policy had become mere dissimulation, her warriors assassins, her energy had degenerated into violence, and all besides had sunk into idleness, sloth, and effeminacy; her literature had equally

fallen into a low state, and Dante was no longer worshipped, no longer even studied. This last is a remarkable fact in the history of Italian literature. In this century there were only three certain editions of the *Commedia*,—two in 16mo, one in 24mo,—and there were no new remarks attached to them; two of them had even the title altered, and were called *Dante's Vision*. What will appear still more strange, there was a compendium of the *Commedia* in prose. The only great Italian of that age was Galileo, who with Dante and Michael Angelo formed that glorious triad which sprang from Florence, and were distinguished for the powers of invention; no other ancient or modern city has produced such a triad. Galileo was so much the more remarkable, as his country was then corrupt and oppressed; but it is the privilege of the natural sciences still to grow up where no other greatness can flourish, and the privilege of the Italian genius to find out always new ways of showing itself.

The eighteenth century is now acknowledged to have been for Italy an age of revival. The States which were formed in the sixteenth century, and had a languishing existence in the seventeenth century, freed themselves from Spanish supremacy in the eighteenth, or at least counterbalanced it by another power; and taking advantage of this respite, such as it was, they developed and organized themselves. The State that then took the first rank, was one which lay in a remote and obscure

corner of Italy, and had of old scarcely taken any part in the revolutions of the peninsula; it had neither shared in her civilization nor her corruptions,—a State and people of which the youth was long and rude, and which slowly grew up to maturity: I speak of Piedmont, the Italian Macedonia or Prussia, and almost the Florence of the eighteenth century. And so true it is, that the political activity and dignity of a state, is the only promoter of its literary activity, and is its only effectual protection, that it was not till then that Piedmont at last took a part in Italian literature; this began gloriously with Alfieri and La Grange. Here then a new literature sprang up, while in the rest of Italy it was only a revival of the old. But there was an active literary spirit throughout the whole peninsula, and nothing was a stronger sign of it than the revived study of Dante. Thirty-four editions were published, and most of them towards the end of the century. Gravina strongly recommended the study of the *Divina Commedia*; Betti, Leonarducci, Alfonso da Varano, imitated Dante; and Volpi, Venturi, and Lombardi published new and better, though still imperfect, commentaries. Tiraboschi gave Dante his due share in his *History of Italian Literature*; and he, and Pelli, and Dionisi wrote various works, which, as regards the life of Dante, are what Muratori's writings are to the general history of Italy, a store-house in which we shall find all that we seek for. But these various editions, commentaries, and lives have pro-

duced little effect, compared to what has been produced by the intense study of Dante by Alfieri and Monti. The first brought from the province which he added to the literature of Italy, I do not know whether to call it strength or ruggedness, or rustic sternness, which perhaps restored vigour to the whole of our literature, and certainly revived the worship of Dante. He was a spirit truly Dantesque. They were alike in their passions of love, indignation, and pride, in their fits of moderation and of extravagance, and in their changes of party. Thus the imitation was not forced, but involuntary, easy, and natural. In Monti, on the other hand, we find more of the genius than the character of Dante. His imitation was more outward, in the form, rather than in the spirit. Alfieri had for his followers (at a distance, unknown to him, and perhaps despised by him), the whole of the generation that was then growing up; Monti, who was very much beloved, had a school which he almost entirely directed. Thus the passionate impulses of the one, and the directing influence of the other, have contributed to render the present age more devoted to the study of Dante than any that have preceded it. And perhaps also the various political events, factions, and revolutions which our present generation has witnessed, may have taught us better even than Monti and Alfieri, to understand and appreciate the thoughts and feelings of the great exile.

At the beginning of the present century, Alfieri said


that there were not perhaps thirty persons in Italy who had really read the *Commedia**. And now, although little more than a third of this century† has passed away, we have more editions, more commentaries, more works upon it, than in any preceding age. There are already more than seventy editions published in this century. The new Commentary of Biagioli, that of the Minerva edition, which is the only *variorum* edition, but not a very good one,—those of Foscolo, Arrivabene, Rossetti, and Tommaseo, are known to all. Perticari, the son-in-law and disciple of Monti, has written a dissertation on Dante's opinions on language, and upon his patriotic spirit. Count Marchetti, Scolari, Missirini, and the author of the *Veltro*, have illustrated various particular points relating to Dante's history; but the last, a man who finds it as difficult to control his erudition, as it is to others to set bounds to their imagination, has illustrated almost the whole of the latter part of his life. To enumerate the imitations of Dante, both good and bad, by so many writers, and the numerous polemical notices of him in the journals, belongs more properly to a catalogue; but I must not forget the *Francesca* of Silvio Pellico and the *Pia* of Sestini,—two productions emanating from Dante, and beautiful specimens of our language. We have many and various proofs of Dante's importance out of Italy, and how much he is honoured

* This I have heard from one who heard Alfieri make the remark.

† Count Balbo published his *Life of Dante* in 1839. (TRANSL.)

north of the Alps and beyond the seas ; this we see by the manner in which he is mentioned in Ginguené's history of Italian literature, by Artaud's French, Boyd's English, and several German translations of the *Commedia* ; by Fauriel's short but complete life of him, by Witte's edition of his letters, and other works ; and finally by the lectures in Paris and Berlin, which were rather a revival of those of Boccaccio. Thus should it be with those nations who do not fear to renovate their literature at the sources of all modern civilization—Christianity and Italy.

But notwithstanding the labours of five centuries, much remains yet to be done for Dante. There is still wanting a really complete edition of his works ; there is still wanting a catalogue of the ancient manuscripts, of the Commentaries written on them, and a complete list of every edition published ; and there is, above all, wanting two completely satisfactory commentaries on the *Divina Commedia*,—one for the beginner, the other for the student. A good commentary on Dante would indeed be an important work ; but there is nothing superhuman required in its accomplishment ; it might easily be executed by one or two men, who were deeply instructed in philology and history ; but they ought to be learned, without a constant desire of the display of their learning ; they ought to avoid argument, and ought rather to compile the works of others, than enter into long dissertations themselves ; they ought to be



less desirous to enhance their own glory than that of their author, and through him, that of their country. If this is not done by one of us Italians, it will certainly be accomplished one day or other by one of those wonderful and conscientious Germans, who by degrees usurp to themselves all our erudition. And if this must be, let us accept it with gratitude, and profit by it, instead of rejecting with stupid contempt the benefit conferred on us by others.

In the meanwhile let us congratulate ourselves on Dante's increased glory, as a happy presage for our age and country. Italy possesses many other writers of genius, indeed the greatest in all arts and modern sciences,—the greatest writer of amatory verses, the greatest novelist, the greatest epic poet, the greatest comic writer, the greatest painter, the greatest sculptor, the first of the great natural philosophers and the greatest of the last,—Petrarch, Boccaccio, Tasso, Ariosto, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Galileo, and Volta; but if we desire an example to stimulate us to virtue, let us turn to Dante, the most virtuous of our writers. In him love sank not into languor; in him the genius of the south was not wasted on low objects, but soared to natural or supernatural heights; by him every virtue was exalted, and the vices of our country and of his own were denounced, and even his private errors sometimes furnished the occasion for general truths. His own city, his own province, and his own Italy, are loved by him with-

out any narrow feelings which would detract from the one in comparison with the other ; nor does he soothe the objects of his attachment with lulling, flattering caresses, which are more shameful than insults, and more hurtful than wounds : our past, present, or future destinies are judged by him with that Christian resignation to Divine Providence, which considers the past with penitence, and rises to act with new force and alacrity in the future. We began with saying, that among all the Italians Dante was peculiarly Italian ; but now that we have become acquainted with his virtues and his faults, we must allow him to be the best of Italians. If I am mistaken, this will be looked upon as the error of a biographer ; but how then or why should all the present generation be equally deceived ?

And now I leave thee with sorrow, as thou wilt perceive, O Reader ! whoever thou art, who hast accompanied me to the end of this short narrative. And may it have been half as pleasing to thee as it has been to me ; for I well know I shall never again meet with a labour equally delightful : above all, would that I might thereby have been of assistance to thee in the study of Dante, for I might then comfort myself with the thought, that for once at least my labour was not in vain. Amid the allurements of the world, whatever progress he may make, a man must always feel that he has in some degree deviated from strict and severe virtue, from that *rectitude* to which Dante devoted his poetic genius. But

to deviate from this *rectitude* amidst the tranquillity of the study, and to frame theoretical excuses for vice or effeminacy, is far less pardonable, especially in Italy, and it will be every day more and more reprobated even in Italy. The writers of the nineteenth century, so numerous in other countries, so few in our own, will be judged, perhaps, less according to their genius than according to their intentions. Then let me rather remain unknown, or let me be enumerated among those who have laboured, however humbly, in the cause of virtue.

NOTE F.

DANTE's son Piero, who had devoted himself to the profession of the law, held a distinguished place among the citizens of Verona, both through his own merits and in virtue of the memory of his father. He had a son called Dante, who also had a son called Leonardo. Leonardo Aretino writes thus: "This Leonardo came to Florence with other young men of Verona handsomely provided, and visited me as the friend of his great-grandfather Dante; and I showed him the house of Dante and his ancestors, and informed him of many things unknown to him, owing to the estrangement of him and his from their country." This Leonardo had a grandson, a third Dante, who had two sons Francesco, and Pietro; with these ended Dante's male descendants, but this Pietro had a daughter Ginevra, who married in 1549 the Count Marc' Antonio Sarego of Verona, and their descendants inherited the surname of Allighieri.

(Leonardo Aretino, *Vita di Dante*, p. 65.)

NOTE G.

A WORTHY man of Ravenna, whose name was Pier Giardino, and who had long been Dante's disciple, grave in his manner and worthy of credit, relates that, after the eighth month from the day of his Master's death, there came to his house before dawn Jacopo di Dante, who told him that that night, while he was asleep, his father Dante had appeared to him, clothed in the whitest garments and his face resplendent with an extraordinary light; that he, Jacopo,

asked him if he lived, and that Dante replied: "Yes, but in the true life, not our life." Then he, Jacopo, asked him if he had completed his work before passing into the true life, and, if he had done so, what had become of that part of it which was missing, which they none of them had been able to find. To this Dante seemed to answer: "Yes, I finished it;" and then took him, Jacopo, by the hand, and led him into that chamber in which he, Dante, had been accustomed to sleep when he lived in this life, and, touching one of the walls, he said: "What you have sought for so much, is here;" and at these words both Dante and sleep fled from Jacopo at once. For which reason Jacopo said he could not rest without coming to explain what he had seen to Pier Giardino, in order that they should go together and search out the place thus pointed out to him, which he had retained excellently in his memory, and to see whether this had been pointed out by a true spirit, or a false delusion. For which purpose, although it was still far in the night, they set off together, and went to the house in which Dante resided at the time of his death. Having called up its present owner, he admitted them, and they went to the place thus pointed out; there they found a blind fixed to the wall, as they had always been used to see it in past days; they lifted it gently up, when they found a little window in the wall, never before seen by any of them, nor did they even know it was there. In it they found several writings, all mouldy from the dampness of the walls, and had they remained there longer, in a little while they would have crumbled away. Having thoroughly cleared away the mould, they found them to be the thirteen cantos that had been wanting to complete the *Commedia*. (Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*, pp. 34-36.)

NOTE H.

WHO THE POET DANTE ALIGHIERI OF FLORENCE
WAS.

IN the said year 1321, in the month of July, died Dante Alighieri of Florence, in the city of Ravenna in Romagna, having returned from an embassy to Venice, undertaken in the service of the Lords of Polenta, with whom he resided ; and in Ravenna, before the door of the principal church, he was buried with great honour, in the habit of a poet and great philosopher. He died exiled from the Comune of Florence, at the age of about fifty-six. This Dante was an honourable and ancient citizen of Florence, belonging to the Porta San Piero, and our neighbour ; and his exile from Florence was on this account : when Charles of Valois of the House of France came to Florence in the year 1301, and expelled from it the Bianca party, as we have mentioned, in times gone by, the said Dante was one of the principal governors of our city, and of that party, although he was a Guelf ; and therefore, without any other crime, he was driven away and banished from Florence, with the said Bianca party, and he went from thence to the University of Bologna, and then to Paris, and to many parts of the world. This man was deeply versed in almost every science, although he was a layman ; he was a great poet and philosopher, and a perfect rhetorician as well in prose as in verse, and in oratory he was a most noble speaker, in rhyming excellent, with a more polished and beautiful style than ever had been in our language, up to his time and since. He wrote in his youth a book entitled the *Vita Nuova* of Love (the *Early Life of Love*) ; and afterwards when he was in exile he wrote twenty most excellent canzoni on morality and love, and among other things he wrote

three noble epistles; the one he sent to the Government of Florence complaining of his being banished although guiltless; another he sent to the Emperor Henry when he was at the siege of Brescia, reproving him for his delay and almost prophesying; the third to the Italian Cardinals, when there was a vacancy after the death of Pope Clement, in order that they should agree to choose an Italian Pope; all in Latin, with lofty diction and with excellent sentences and authorities, which were much commended by the wise and learned. And he wrote the *Commedia*, where, in polished rhyme, and with great and subtle arguments, moral, natural and astrological, philosophical and theological, with beautiful and new figures, comparisons, and poetical graces, he composed and treated in a hundred chapters, or rather cantos, of the existence and state of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, as loftily as it is possible to speak of these, so that all who are of subtle understanding, by the said treatise, may see and understand. He much delighted in that *Commedia* to rail and cry out in the manner of a poet, more perhaps than was quite befitting; but perhaps his exile made him do so. He also wrote the *Monarchia*, in which he treated of the office of the Poet and of the Emperors. And he began a commentary on fourteen of the above-named moral canzoni in the vulgar tongue, which on account of his death is not found perfect, except on three; which, to judge from what is seen, would have proved a lofty, beautiful, subtle, and most important work, because it is equally ornamented with noble diction, and fine philosophical and astrological reasoning. He besides wrote a little book entitled *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, of which he promised to make four books, but only two have been found, perhaps owing to his premature death, in which in forcible and elegant Latin and fine reasoning he censures all the vulgar tongues of Italy. This Dante, owing to his knowledge, was somewhat presumptuous, reserved, and disdainful, and in the manner of a philosopher little gracious, and did not know well how to converse with the un-

learned; but on account of his other virtues and science and worth as a citizen, it appears right to give him perpetual remembrance in this our Chronicle; nevertheless his noble works left to us in writing bear true testimony of him, and honourable fame to our city.

(Giovanni Villani, lib. ix. cap. cxxxvi.)

THE END.

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